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CHOICES

THE HUMAN

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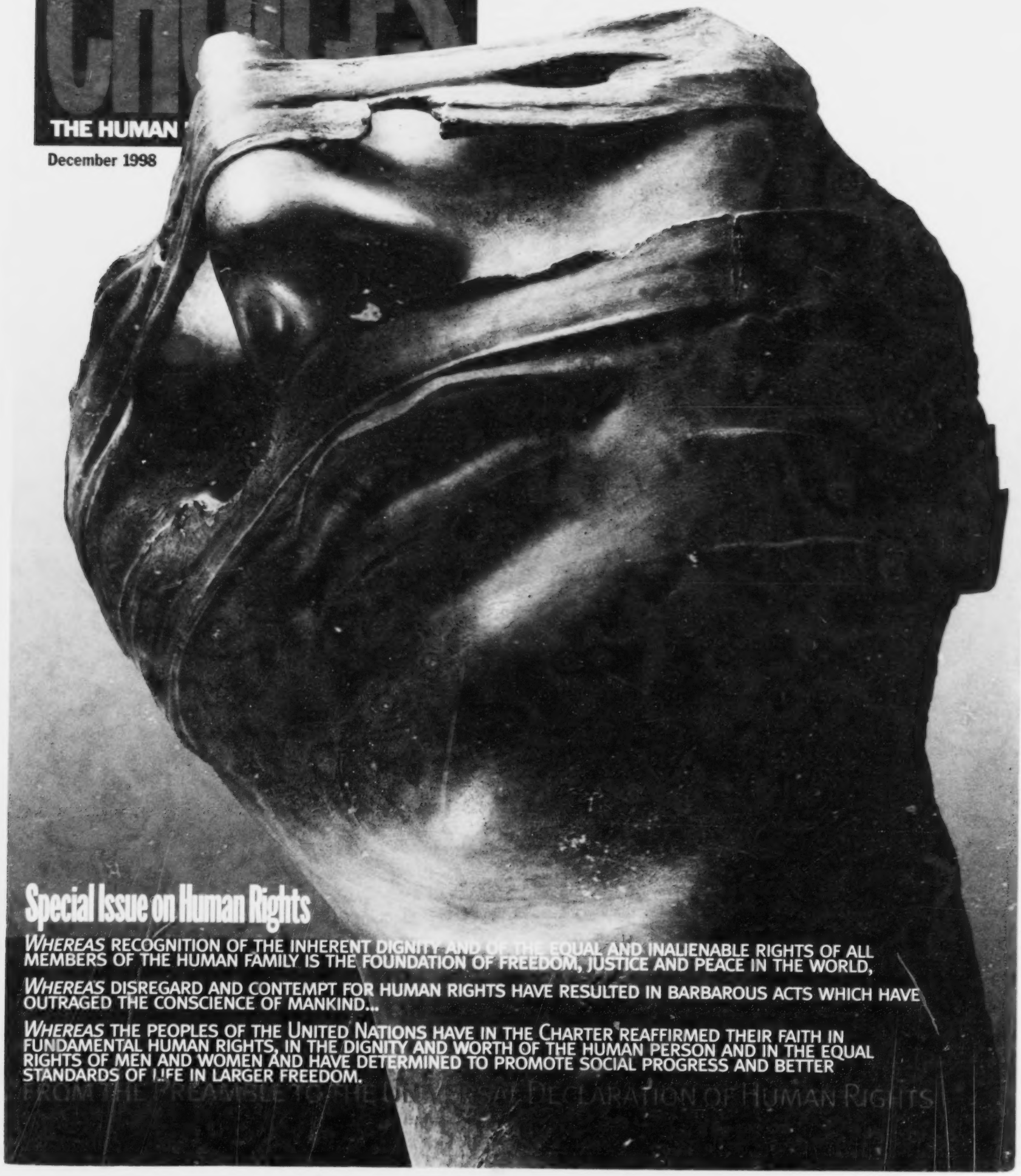

Special Issue on Human Rights

WHEREAS RECOGNITION OF THE INHERENT DIGNITY AND OF THE EQUAL AND INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF ALL MEMBERS OF THE HUMAN FAMILY IS THE FOUNDATION OF FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE IN THE WORLD,

WHEREAS DISREGARD AND CONTEMPT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS HAVE RESULTED IN BARBAROUS ACTS WHICH HAVE OUTRAGED THE CONSCIENCE OF MANKIND...

WHEREAS THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS HAVE IN THE CHARTER REAFFIRMED THEIR FAITH IN FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS, IN THE DIGNITY AND WORTH OF THE HUMAN PERSON AND IN THE EQUAL RIGHTS OF MEN AND WOMEN AND HAVE DETERMINED TO PROMOTE SOCIAL PROGRESS AND BETTER STANDARDS OF LIFE IN LARGER FREEDOM.

FROM THE PREAMBLE TO THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

On 16 July, the world lost a visionary—and friend—when Mahbub ul Haq passed away in New York at the age of 64. Just weeks earlier I had met him walking down First Avenue, across from the United Nations, engaged, as usual, in animated conversation with colleagues. Though he left UNDP in 1995, Mahbub returned often to help us in various ways: to advise on the *Human Development Report*, which was his brainchild and, just before his death, to be part of a UNDP task force that travelled to countries worst hit by the economic crisis in Asia.

UNDP and the United Nations system as a whole owe Mahbub a big debt of gratitude. Perhaps more than any other individual, he changed forever the way we think about development.

The annual *Human Development Report*, commissioned by UNDP, is accepted today as a kind of institution. Yet its approach, its departure from the economic paradigm of development, was radical. And from its first publication in 1990, the going was never easy. The report is best known for its Human Development Index, which ranks countries' level of progress not by economic statistics alone, but also by indicators of education and health.

Mahbub, who was always ahead of his time, was also a champion of human rights and advanced the right to development in any way he could.

After leaving UNDP, Mahbub returned to his home country of Pakistan to start up a regional Human Development Centre. He was particularly proud of the centre's second annual report on

Mahbub, who was always ahead of his time, was also a champion of human rights and advanced the right to development in any way he could.

Human Development in South Asia, published last spring, which took education as its theme. The report drew attention to low literacy rates in the region, particularly among women and girls, and blamed it on a lack of political will. In an interview published by *Newsweek International*, Mahbub described the situation as nothing short of a disaster, and said that "Poverty is not an excuse for failing to invest in our children's futures."

A tireless critic of military spending, Mahbub was saddened by the recent show of nuclear force in India and Pakistan. In an unpublished piece he submitted to CHOICES last summer, he reminded policymakers that nuclear confrontation would be costly to the region and to the future economic prosperity of its vast population. He said that South Asia had the potential to be the "economic frontier of the 21st century" and lamented the growing risk of an unproductive arms race that could jeopardize the region's prospects.

Mahbub did not limit his comments to developing countries. The shortsightedness of pursuing

Mahbub ul Haq 1934-1998

military might to the detriment of social goals was the simple message that he delivered for almost a decade, to developed and developing countries alike. Wouldn't it be fitting if, as a final tribute to Mahbub, the message were finally heeded?

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CHOICES
THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE

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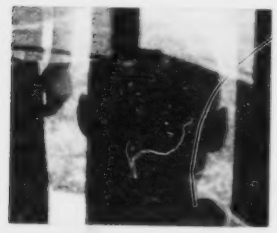

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A publication of the United Nations Development Programme

FREEDOM FROM POVERTY IS A HUMAN RIGHT

By James Gustave Speth

Fifty years ago, shocked by the atrocities of World War II, the international community came together to adopt the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was a time for mourning, for soul-searching and for healing, marked by an urgent quest for a new international ethic. A consensus emerged, out of the horrors of war—one that called for providing all human beings with the security of fundamental rights. A new vision was forged—a compact for all humanity—based on freedom, justice and equality and the inherent dignity of every person.

The Universal Declaration was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948. Since that time, the Declaration, and the vision for which it stands, has been the cornerstone of a dynamic human rights movement worldwide. Starting with the Universal Declaration, initiatives and instruments extend the security of human rights to new groups, and take into account more specific concerns, within diverse cultures, religious contexts, traditions, and legal systems.

But despite the progress in all areas of human rights, the goals of the Universal Declaration remain elusive for the men, women and children who still live in poverty. It is time we recognized poverty for what it is: a brutal denial of human rights for the 1.3 billion who live on less than US$1 a day. The poor are deprived of many things, including a long life. The absence of basic amenities such as safe drinking water and health care means that almost a third of the people in the world's least developed countries have a life expectancy of just 40 years. Illiteracy imposes severe limits on the access of poor people to knowledge, informed opinions and political participation. Women in poverty, who are victims of the same deprivations as men, carry the additional burden of unequal access to services, legal status and financial credit necessary to support their families.

Incarceration by poverty can be as cruel and confining as any political gulag, but for almost four decades the human rights debate has been polarized by ideology. While some emphasize civil and political rights, others argue that without progress in development, the conditions for enjoyment of civil and political rights could not exist. The divide was unbridgeable during the Cold War, but renewed efforts are now under way to bring members of the international community back to their original best hopes for the future—an embracing commitment to human rights, including the right to development.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has said: "Truly sustainable development is possible only when the political, economic and social rights of all people are fully respected.... The right to development is the measure of the respect of all other human rights. That should be our aim: a situation in which all individuals are able to maximize their potential and to contribute to the evolution of society as a whole."

The UN Development Programme is promoting a campaign to end the scourge of mass poverty within the lifetime of today's children. The campaign is drawing strength from the diverse resources of the United Nations system and gathering momentum from a growing body of international commitments set through recent UN world conferences.

To date, 78 countries have national plans to eradicate poverty or have built poverty reduction into their development strategies; 40 more countries are working on such plans. It is a trend that UNDP is supporting vigorously. We are working with these countries in the areas of policy and planning, and through innovative grassroots anti-poverty programmes. Everywhere, our aim is to put the eradication of extreme poverty at the front and centre of policy-making.

UNDP is also responding to growing demand by countries for other kinds of services. Increasingly, for example, governments request our assistance in their policies and programmes to reform judicial systems, promote democratization, and support a free and independent press.

In Cambodia and Ecuador, we are training military personnel in human rights. In Latvia, we helped set up an Office for Human Rights to ensure that national legislation and the country's obligations under various international treaties are consistent in the handling of individual complaints. In more than 70 countries, half of them in Africa, we have assisted in voter education, and election support.

In this special issue of CHOICES, we look at how some of these efforts are changing people's lives and their prospects for the future. The articles are accompanied by an exclusive interview with Mary Robinson, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, whose personal commitment to the cause has given it new vitality within the United Nations family.

In an era of abundant wealth and information, surely it is possible to vanquish large-scale poverty. And fifty years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, surely all people are entitled to the recognition of our common humanity. Human development and well-being, literacy, good health and employment, like civil, political and cultural rights, are not favours or acts of charity bestowed on the poor. They are human rights, and they are as valid today as they were fifty years ago. ■

James Gustave Speth is Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme.

EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO A STANDARD OF LIVING ADEQUATE FOR THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF HIMSELF AND OF HIS FAMILY, INCLUDING FOOD, CLOTHING, HOUSING AND MEDICAL CARE AND NECESSARY SOCIAL SERVICES.

SPEAKING WITH MARY ROBINSON

By Ian Williams

Ireland's Presidency used to be a ceremonial office, whose holder was supposed to shake hands with important visitors and open schools and hospitals. When Mary Robinson was elected, she stretched the boundaries of the office to fit her concerns, foremost among them, human rights. As the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Robinson has shown similar propensity to expand the nature of the office while keeping its sharp focus and small staff to avoid the snares of bureaucracy. By taking a high profile in the job, she has of course exposed herself to criticism—from governments for doing too much, and from human rights activists for doing too little. Some countries complain about her emphasis on political rights, others about her staunch defence of economic rights. Taken together, the criticisms suggest that she may be on the right track. CHOICES interviewed her at UN headquarters in New York in September, just after her visit to China.—IW

WILLIAMS: *Market-led visions of human rights have tended towards Victor Hugo's view that the rich and the poor have an equal right to sleep under the bridges of the Seine. Against this there have been attempts to assert that economic and social rights are more important than civil and political rights. Can the "right to development" balance these extremes?*

ROBINSON: Since I took up this office a year ago, I've found it very important to apply a consistently balanced approach —to say the same thing to each of the regional groups and to maintain the interdependence and indivisibility of rights. I'm strong on civil and political rights, and I'm determined to be strong on economic, cultural and social rights, and by that route to arrive at the achievement of what we call the right to development, which is a synthesis of both sets of rights. We're never going to have an easy or comfortable debate on these issues, but one of the reasons I wanted to take up this responsibility is that we're not going to advance human rights in a true sense unless we do as the 1948

Universal Declaration of Human Rights says. That represents a more balanced approach than we've seen for the last fifty years.

WILLIAMS: *At a meeting here a few years ago of ambassadors and non-governmental organizations looking for ways to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration, it was agreed that no attempt should be made to improve or update the document—because anything that could be agreed to now would be much weaker than the original. Do you agree with this assessment?*

ROBINSON: I'm determined to mark the anniversary, but not as a celebration, because we don't have cause to celebrate. At the forefront of our minds when thinking about human rights is the extent of existing violations, the worsening situation in some areas, and the terrible violation that absolute poverty is for millions around the world. Certainly I think that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has stood the test of time, which is one way of saying that it has validity. Obviously there could have been a more explicit gender perspective, for example. However, as an affirmation, not only of individual rights, but, in Article 29, of duties owed to community, I think that the Declaration is a living text that is very relevant to the modern world. It also has the merits of not being written in lawyers' language, so it's accessible. In a primary school in Lhasa a week ago I was able to produce a copy of the Universal Declaration in the Tibetan language, which was immediately understandable by teachers and schoolchildren.

At the time, I was also aware that flooding in China had devastated a population larger than that of the United States, leaving people without food security or shelter for the winter, which is a violation of *their* human rights. There's always the danger that human rights issues will be politicized. But I'm determined to address both sets of rights.

WILLIAMS: *You mention the role of community rights. For the last decade, the battles for "group rights" in the form of ethnic and sectarian struggles have dominated the headlines, ruining the development of many countries. Can you square the circle?*

ROBINSON: A human rights programme needs to promote multiculturalism, respect for the other, and to create space for people. But at the same time, there are groups that need to have their rights promoted and defended. I take very seriously, for example, my responsibility as coordinator for the International Decade for the World's Indigenous People and the importance of recognizing their rights.

While in China, I visited the headquarters of the Federation for People with Disabilities. There are more than 60 million people in China with physical or mental disabilities. I visited a good rehabilitation centre in Beijing, but I was also told outright that it was the only such centre. Most people with disabilities do not have access to education and support. We do need to focus on issues where, because of particular concerns, groups have a particular angle on human rights.

WILLIAMS: *As a UN official you have to deal with governments. How do you cope with the trade-offs that you are sometimes forced to make?*

ROBINSON: It is a difficult path, but for me it's an important path to tread. My mandate is to open and maintain dialogue with governments because they have the primary responsibility to maintain human rights. An important part of my job is to protect human rights mechanisms and treaties. So when I went to China, for example, I took with me an *aide-memoire* of all the reports, conclusions and issues raised by the relevant rapporteurs, working groups and treaty bodies working on human rights relating both to China and Tibet, and asked for the government's commitment to review all of it as part of the process of the visit. I got that commitment and a memorandum of intent to begin a process of technical cooperation, so we'll be sending a technical mission within a couple of months.

But apart from that, and because of the UN reform proposals, which see human rights as a core value for the whole of the UN and its agencies, I met with UN colleagues working in China and discussed with them the various components of human rights they were seeking to protect at different levels. So there's the work with other programmes and agencies to develop a more explicit human rights-based approach and there's the dialogue with the government itself and with the wider civil society. In a country the scale of China it's not that easy. But despite the difficulties, and some restrictions, particularly in Tibet, this first visit did open up a process that will continue.

WILLIAMS: *You have signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Is this just a bureaucratic exercise, or is it a practical step to integrate human rights in development activities?*

ROBINSON: Yes we did, and it has already proved to be very practical. We also concluded one with the UN Population Fund, and are negotiating one with the UN Conference on Trade and Development. And we have older agreements with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the UN Children's Fund. We are looking again at bringing these up-to-date to ensure that within the UN itself, at the country level and in the training of all UN personnel, human rights is a core value. After all, why work for the UN unless it stands for certain values?

WILLIAMS: *UNDP provides human rights assistance "at the request" of governments. On the other hand, you are pushing UNDP*

resident representatives in their capacity as UN coordinators to be more pro-active. Isn't this a contradiction?

ROBINSON: We are discussing these issues a lot, and doing quite a lot of training. Still, I think it will be months and maybe even a couple of years before there is full confidence in the language and approach, before all UNDP resident representatives see themselves as part of a programme that works for development that's sustainable because human rights are at the heart of it.

But it makes a big difference that we are discussing these issues and having joint seminars like the conference in Oslo on economic and social rights, and developing more analytical approaches to the right to development. Part of the reason I'm so keen on this kind of cooperation is that, being Irish, I'm against empire building. I don't believe the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should grow and fill a big space. It should be a catalyst that tries to influence other UN programmes. And under the

influence of [UN Secretary-General] Kofi Annan, this is happening.

WILLIAMS: *For decades, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have been accused of falling short on human rights. Should they share the UN's core value?*

ROBINSON: We've had good discussions with both boards [the World Bank and the IMF] in Washington. Recently I wrote a foreword to a publication the World Bank is bringing out on human rights. Even that is an important beginning.

WILLIAMS: *Was it a slender volume?*

ROBINSON: Yes, a slender volume [laughing]. But [World Bank President] Jim Wolfensohn is very open to this. There's a long way to go, but they've taken the first step.

WILLIAMS: *UNDP's* Human Development Report *and Human Development Index*

are often seen as one of the turning points in the battle of ideas with the old Bretton Woods approach to development. Do you think the report pays enough attention to human rights?

ROBINSON: It was interesting to be in China and participate there in the launch of the 1998 *Human Development Report*, which focuses on consumer issues. In that one issue, one could see in a very real way the inequities in the world today and the interdependence of development and human rights.

I'm more and more aware that, if we are going to move from language on economic and social rights to the reality of rights and entitlements, then we must have benchmarks to measure. So data of all kinds, the various conventions, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the *Human Development Report* itself are all important in further developing the indicators we need to affect national budgets and ultimately affect the Bretton Woods institutions.

WILLIAMS: *At least one African head of state has said that he considers official development assistance (ODA) to be counterproductive—that it has served to produce an oligarchy of bureaucrats whose lifestyle and attitudes are divorced from the rest of the population and hence repressive, since they want no threats to their position. Does ODA help or hinder the promotion of human rights?*

ROBINSON: I've certainly read some interesting and thoughtful criticism of approaches to aid and development issues. But one approach that I have been encouraging very much is that of "capacity-building." In addressing human rights violations there are certain standards that must be set and implemented. It's tough, and it must be done by national institutions that have the capacity to carry the work out. International assistance can play a role in developing that capacity.

One of the positive developments in Africa, for example, has been the growth of national human rights commissions. At the beginning of July I attended a conference of such commissions. There were 16 of them from English- and French-speaking Africa, and about six other African countries represented that are in the process of establishing commissions. They are building independent-minded, pluralist institutions that will look at complaints against the police, address human rights education at the grassroots, and engender a culture of human rights in their countries.

WILLIAMS: *We have seen the work done by human rights activists in the African Great Lakes region, and one of your most quoted phrases was your reference to the cycle of impunity that you identified after a visit there. That cycle, in which unpunished crimes breed yet more crimes, seems to be rolling along, crushing development prospects in its path. Can more be done?*

ROBINSON: I think it is very worrying that there is impunity for gross human rights violations, and not just in Africa. That is one of the reasons why the establishment of the International Criminal Court was so important. It's vital to understand that human rights issues can't all be determined by consensus, by nice language: they have compelling content, which is not about language, but about disappearances, torture, gross violations, terrible displacement of people from their homes.

WILLIAMS: *You've been in this job about a year now, in charge of moving a 50-year-old document forward. Don't you find that things seem to be getting worse, with killings and torture on a bigger, more industrial scale than ever before?*

ROBINSON: I think that there are two different trends. One is that human rights is becoming a core value in the UN itself. It has a more explicit, a more rights-based approach—and that's making a difference. We also have the horrible fact of ethnic cleansing, which I do not believe should be tolerated in the way it is being tolerated. That's both a political and a huge human rights issue. We have the problems of impunity, and the failure to address it at an intergovernmental, political level to the extent that's needed.

It's difficult to engender a real sense of that, but it i part of the task, and at least now there is an Office of the High Commissioner to be a catalyst for that debate. I have only one agenda! And that agenda is a very serious one that I will further at any opportunity.

WILLIAMS: *So you're glad you took the job—you haven't had second thoughts?*

ROBINSON: No. It's difficult, very intensive, and quite stressful, but it's a job worth doing. And it's a privilege to be leading a team of people who have a particular commitment. For many of them in my office, it's a kind of dedication that has a quality of its own. It's really encouraging for me to work with such colleagues. And it means that I can put up with some of the terrible bureaucracy at the UN—but I won't defend the indefensible! ■

British journalist Ian Williams is UN correspondent for the Nation.

BRUTALITY IN THE NAME OF HONOUR

In many traditional societies, violence against women is tolerated when it is seen as preserving a family's "honour." In Jordan at least, that is changing. With the support of local authorities and the royal family, potential victims are getting help. And the policies and assumptions that perpetuate such human rights violations are being openly aired—and challenged.

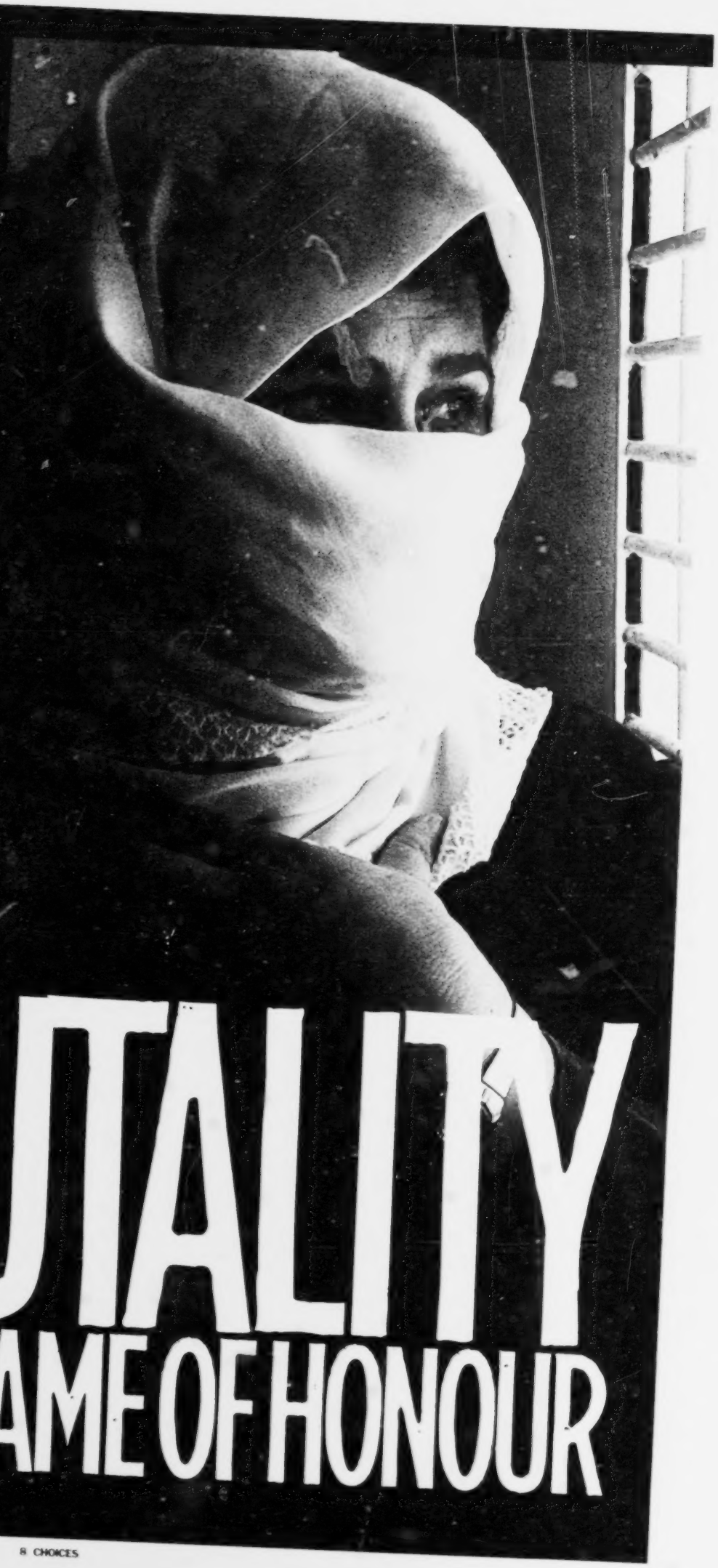
By Ilene R. Prusher

Zarka, Jordan—Hanan* doesn't like to talk about what happened to her. When she was 12 years old, she was raped by her cousin. Now, a year and a half later, she's in a state-run shelter for girls, alongside a few runaways and other minors who have been sent here after being convicted on various charges. Hanan is here not because she committed any crime, but because if she goes home, she might wind up dead.

Hanan is a victim on many levels.

The Jordanian authorities and Hanan herself fear that if she's set free, one of her

*Most names have been changed to protect privacy.



brothers or her father may kill her in order to "cleanse" the family's honour. Though her cousin, 30, has since been sent to prison, the rape is viewed as a stain on the entire family's name, and the disgrace for the matter falls largely on her.

Hanan seems to agree.

"It's my fault," she says, arms crossed in defensiveness, posture slouched in uneasiness, gaze fixed downward in shame. She is a brooding forest of olive skin, liquid maple eyes, and long chestnut hair, and she sits on the couch as though she's waiting for it—or the earth itself—to swallow her. Her clothes seem to have been worn by somebody bigger and older than she.

"I would be in danger if I go back to my family. For sure, they're mad at me. Here," she says, "at least it's safe."

Hanan's relationship with her cousin—who raped her four times, threatening to kill her if she told anyone—is not considered an incestuous one. In some parts of Jordanian society, it is fairly common to marry a cousin. Some of the victims of so-called "honour killings" have been women who ran off to marry the man of their choice rather than the cousins their parents chose. The real taboo is having a relationship outside of marriage. The most conservative families stretch that to mean any relationship, however chaste. A girl who has a boyfriend is subject to rumours that she may have lost her virginity and may become unmarriageable. And rumours, in some cases, are all a man needs to hear before he acts to defend his family's honour, despite the fact that Islamic law requires four witnesses to find someone guilty of adultery.

Hanan's family didn't need any rumours. They figured it out when she was four months pregnant. She carried the baby to term here, inside the rather bare walls of this shelter with its row of bunkbeds, a 40-minute drive from her family in Amman. Her son has been placed in an orphanage.

She has been placed here for her own protection. Sometimes, her mother comes to visit her. But her five brothers and her father never do.

Has she been directly threatened by them?

She pauses. She looks, as always, to Khawla, a counsellor at the shelter, for sympathy and approval. Khawla smiles. Hanan winces a nervous but genuine smile in return. They have a connection. "I don't want to answer," she replies.

Would she rather stay here?

"I feel conflicted. Sometimes I'm fed up with this place, but at other times I feel safer here, so I think it's not worth the risk to go home."

Many in Jordan think that the best hope for a raped woman is marriage to an older man, such as a widower, or to the perpetrator himself, particularly if he is a relative. If that were to happen, the families could make amends and their honour would be restored. That option has been suggested in Hanan's case, but since her cousin has been given a ten-year sentence and the two branches of the family have suffered too deep a rift to repair, there is no simple way back to normal life in sight.

If she's still in this predicament when she turns 18—a possibility social workers here don't rule out—she'll end up being moved to Juweida prison in Amman. There, she'll have the company of about 50 other women who have been placed in "protective custody" by the police. Some are there against their will, some voluntarily. Not all of their cases are as extreme as Hanan's—some are in prison for having eloped with their boyfriends—but all are in danger of being murdered for having brought some sort of dishonour on the family.

By the time Hanan turns 18, she will however have a better option, as will other girls in similar situations. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's Ministry of Social Development, with funding from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), plans to open a women's shelter—the first institution of its kind in the Arab world. The shelter would provide a safe haven for women in need of protection from their families, and for other victims of domestic violence.

The shelter is just one facet of a movement that is beginning to combat violence against women in Jordan on many fronts. Five years ago, a relatively vocal women's movement in Jordan launched a strategy to tackle the problem in many sectors of society. After participating in the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the Jordanian National Committee for Women (JNCW) began talking about the struggle for women's rights as human rights.

It helps that the Jordanian royal family has been listening. King Hussein—the monarch who has ruled this country for 46 years—publicly addressed the issue of violence against women in November 1997. In his speech from the throne at the opening session of parliament, he made an implicit reference to the "dangerous phenomena that remain a source of women's suffering, and which, unfortunately, constitute an inhumane violation of their basic rights."

The king's younger sister, Princess Basma Bint Talal, has had more hands-on involvement in the long march towards women's rights. As chairwoman of JNCW, she has been trying to gradually alter policies and perceptions that have traditionally legitimized violence against women.

"It's a process that takes time, time to change behaviour and to create awareness," Princess Basma says. "A lot more needs to be done, honestly, but it's going to take time and we are hampered by limited resources."

She, like others here, says the fast pace of development in Jordan and the entrance of women into the workplace has increased gender tensions and led to a recent increase in domestic violence. In 1997, there were 20 so-called honour crimes recorded by the Public Security Department in Jordan.

"This is the price we're paying for rapid change," says Princess Basma. "But the family unit in Jordan is still strong and intact, and we need to build on that strength and reinforce it."

Leadership tends to work from the top down, but ideological gaps between Jordan's educated elite and the rest of society are often vast.

Among the poor, but also in the uppermost levels of Jordanian society, a family's honour, or *sharaf*, is considered priceless. For centuries, the concept of honour has provided the moral and legal

◂This woman lives and works at Juweida prison in Amman, in fear of the violence that could await her outside its protective walls.

SHARON ABRADT/UNDP

EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO LIFE, LIBERTY AND SECURITY OF PERSON.

A LIFE FREE OF VIOLENCE: IT'S OUR RIGHT

Violence shadows women from infancy through adulthood—from female infanticide to genital mutilation to sex-trafficking and rape. It kills or disables more women aged 15 to 44 than do cancer, malaria, traffic accidents or even war.

The World Health Organization estimates that at least one in five women worldwide is physically or sexually abused in her lifetime. And research suggests that women are more at risk from their husbands, fathers, neighbours or colleagues than they are from strangers. Despite this evidence, the international community did not explicitly declare domestic violence a breach of women's human rights until the 1993 UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, as many as six out of ten women have suffered physical or psychological abuse by their husbands or intimate partners, according to *The World's Women 1995*, a UN publication. In some countries in the region, domestic violence is the leading cause of hospitalization of women of reproductive age.

The toll is also economic: a recent Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) study estimates that lost productivity resulting from domestic violence costs Chile two per cent of its gross domestic product each year; in Nicaragua, 1.6 per cent. An estimated 41 per cent of unemployed women in Nicaragua are victims of serious physical abuse.

The figures are staggering. But so are the ways the law and society react to such violence. In 12 Latin American countries, a rapist can be exonerated if he offers to marry the victim and she accepts. (The families of victims often pressure them to marry their attackers to restore the family "honour.") In some countries, the rapist can be set free even when the victim refuses a marriage offer.

In response to this enormous challenge, UNDP and the UN Development Fund for Women are coordinating a regional campaign to end violence against women and girls in Latin America and the Caribbean. Involving eight UN agencies, the initiative has been awarded a US$1 million grant from the United Nations Foundation, established by Ted Turner. Among the campaign's goals: public education, changes in policies and legislation, the strengthening of women's organizations dealing with the problem, and enhanced coordination among UN organizations working on these issues.

"The Beijing Conference [for Women] did a lot to bring women's issues to the fore, especially the issue of empowerment," says UNDP's Aparna Mehrotra, deputy chief of the regional programme and UNDP campaign coordinator. "Violence constitutes the single most prevalent obstacle to the empowerment of women around the world. Eliminating it is fundamental to a culture of peace and justice."

The inter-agency campaign was launched in November 1997 with the slogan, "A life free of violence: it's our right." Since then, 24 Latin American and Caribbean countries have developed national programmes or activities to fight domestic violence.

In Brazil, UNDP, the Minister of Justice and more than 80 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are spearheading a social compact to end violence against women.

"The Brazilian government has asked us to facilitate a participatory process to help develop public policies," says Junia Leonel, a UNDP programme officer in that country. "Our job is to serve as a network—to collect, set priorities and articulate actions from all over Brazil." Leonel adds that while government has a role in ending violence, "each of us on a personal level has a tremendous responsibility to do our part."

UNDP's Rebecca Arias helps coordinate the campaign in El Salvador. After several meetings with government and NGO representatives, participants realized that organizations were working largely on their own and sharing little information. UNDP now provides space in which groups can regularly get together. "This is the first time that a network of groups from all sectors is working on violence against women," says Arias. "There's a lot of enthusiasm."

The network has pushed successfully for reforms in the penal code to allow judges to punish aggressors. (While domestic abuse is illegal in El Salvador, the law was difficult to enforce.) After meeting with lawyers, judges and attorneys, the national assembly approved the reforms in July, which the President then ratified.

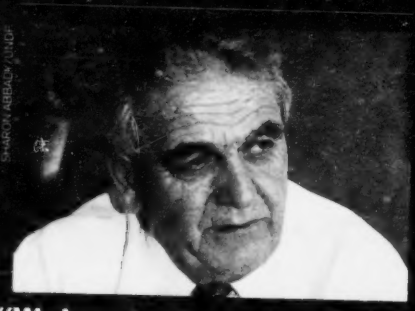
Inspired by the Latin American initiative, 12 UN agencies including UNDP have launched a similar campaign to eliminate violence against women in Africa. It will focus on such issues as domestic abuse, female genital mutilation and violence against women during war.—*Dianne Sherman*

underpinnings of Arab society, particularly for the original Jordanians of Bedouin descent. If someone is wronged, the perpetrator's family must make amends to avoid a feud. Bedouin *qanoun*, like the law of many ancient societies, demands an eye for an eye: if someone is killed, a member of the victim's family is legally permitted to avenge the death on anyone in the murderer's family, although in many cases, the families settle the dispute by giving livestock, food and other gifts.

A woman's honour, however, is less negotiable. If it is believed she has had an affair, the only way to clear her name, if at all, is for her to be married to the man in question. Brothers, uncles and fathers, however, often choose to murder the girl or woman in her own home.

While Jordanian law doesn't explicitly condone honour killings, it treats the defense of family honour as a mitigating circumstance. The law stipulates that a man's punishment for the murder of his wife or any blood relative will be reduced if he has found them engaged in an adulterous act, and kills or attempts to kill them. Article 340 of the Jordanian penal codes says: "He who commits a crime in a fit of fury caused by an immoral or dangerous act on the part of the victim benefits from a reduction in penalty." Instead of the murderer getting 15 years to life in prison—or for premeditated murder, the death penalty—a man convicted of an honour killing will serve as little as six months and usually no longer than three years.

After the crime, the perpetrator will often turn himself in to the police. That's because he is usually proud of what he has done, and he knows that he will get a reduced sentence if he declares the murder an honour killing. The "fit of fury" clause is rarely invoked: in most cases the murder is premeditated, and often the perpetrator has been egged on by other relatives—including other women. Some family members have reportedly ululated after the murder and shot celebratory rounds of gunfire in the air. Sometimes, an underage male is elected to carry out the murder, since he can't be tried as an adult and will be released when he turns 18 anyway.



SHARON ABBADY/UNDP

"We have to change the law so that we deal with that murder as a general crime, like any other murder. One problem we have is that there are no women in parliament."

—MOHAMMED KHEIR MAMSER

Several advocates for reform want to change the legal system's unofficial nod to honour killings. One is Mohammed Kheir Mamser, the Minister of Social Development who has given his backing for the women's shelter.

"We're trying to change these articles, and we want to give it priority," says Mamser. "We have to change the law so that we deal with that murder as a general crime, like any other murder. One problem we have is that there are no women in parliament," he says, assessing the hurdles to passing such legislation.

On a more fundamental level, however, there are deep legal barriers to delegitimizing these killings. The Jordanian system of justice emphasizes the dispute between the perpetrator and the victim, not between the perpetrator and the state. In the latter, Western model, if the state wants to prosecute someone, the victim's consent is irrelevant. In Jordan, the victim—and her family—can choose whether or not to press charges against the perpetrator. Since the perpetrator is so often a relative, the family drops the complaint and the state has no case.

"Sometimes the problem is not legislation. The problem is here," says Mamser, tapping his temple with a forefinger, "in attitudes, social habits, mentality, and some of our traditions. That's the hardest thing: to change minds."

Salwa hasn't changed hers.

Last year, when Salwa was 15, she killed her own mother. In an attempt to restore her honour and keep the fiancé she feared she would lose, she poured kerosene around her mother's bed, set it on fire, closed the door and left the house. Her mother died in the hospital two months later.

Salwa did it because her grandmother told her to. Her mother's mother repeatedly warned Salwa that her divorced mother's relationships with different men

would ruin her honour and wreck Salwa's engagement. Her maternal grandmother spent days convincing her to kill her mother, told her how she should go about it, and promised to give her 200 dinars if she followed through.

"She kept telling me about her bad reputation, and the shame my mother brought on the family," says Salwa, whose light-green eyes, cherubic beauty and high-set ponytail seem more evocative of a high-school cheerleader than a teenage murderess. She tells her story readily, smiles often, and makes eye contact. She mashes her hands together as she speaks, the only sign of her nervousness.

"My mother never did anything to hurt me, but she had bad conduct and a bad reputation. She was an adulteress. I saw that myself," says Salwa, who was also sent to the girls shelter in Zarka after being convicted of her mother's murder in juvenile court.

"My grandma said, 'Your fiancé will leave you if he hears about the bad reputation of your mother.' I felt that her dignity was my dignity, and her reputation was my reputation. People were already starting to say, 'there's the daughter of that slut,' so I had to do it."

Her main motivation for the matricide—holding onto her future husband —proved a failure. After the murder they wed, but when she was convicted and sentenced to stay here until age 18, he divorced her. They were married two weeks.

Salwa lived with her father after her parents divorced, as is customary in many Arab countries, and when she's 18, she'll be released to his home. In the meantime, he visits her regularly and lends his support to what she's done, placing mild blame for the incident on his former mother-in-law. A Jordanian court decided Salwa's grandmother was innocent and cleared her of incitement charges.

Salwa, who wears jeans and a sports jersey that seem out of step with the conservative world she tried to please, has forgiven her grandmother, too. She expresses no regret for killing her mother—only regret that the duty fell on her shoulders because there were no male relatives around.

"What happened should have happened at any rate, but it shouldn't have been me to have to do it," she says. "Yes," she adds, "she had to die."

After the interview, social workers familiar with Salwa's case talk about their dilemma. If they don't try to get her to rethink her belief that her mother deserved to die, have they fulfilled their mission of rehabilitating her? If they do—telling her that society's ideas about a woman's honour is wrong—do they decrease the chances that she'll be able to return home, reintegrate successfully, and have a "normal" life?

Rana Husseini is one of the Jordanian woman who, as a general rule, will choose rethinking over returning any day. Husseini, who was hired by the country's English language newspaper, the *Jordan Times*, in 1994, started off as a cub crime reporter. She never set out to be a crusader for women's rights. Then she happened on a story of a woman who was raped by her younger brother, then later killed by her older brother to save the family's honour.

"I came across a very sad story," she says. "I said, 'Why did you kill her?' And they said, 'She seduced him.' Then they said, 'Why did you come here? Why are you dressed like that? And why aren't you married yet?' " recalls Husseini, 31, who prefers casual pants and shirts to the more common dress code of Jordanian women, which usually consists of long dresses and headscarves.

Soon after, she began investigating cases of other murder reports that she suspected might be honour killings, and diligently reported each crime.

Her articles were hardly ever moralizing—she presented the details of the murder, and then followed up on what kind of sentence, if any, judges gave the perpetrator. But even that was controversial.

Many accused her of airing the country's dirty laundry. At first, policemen asked her why she was bothering with such piffling crimes. Victims' families told her to butt out. Others, like the brothers in the first case she uncovered, told their story willingly, proud of what they had done.

Her alarming reports—and her regular tally of the number of women killed in honour crimes in a given year—kept forcing the issue back onto the national agenda. While Arabic-language newspapers wouldn't report on her stories, Jordanian decision-makers as well as foreign diplomats and development officials were reading carefully.

Husseini was recently recognized for her work by winning the Reebok Human Rights Award. In her continuing effort to change attitudes in Jordan, she organized a public relations campaign to combat violence against women. Sponsored by UNIFEM, the campaign was launched this fall to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Journalist Rana Husseini at UN headquarters in New York, where she was presented with the Reebok Human Rights Award last March.

◄ A sewing class at the state-run shelter for girls.

"People need to know that women are getting killed and no one is doing anything about it," says Husseini during a whirlwind afternoon discussion that took place as she strode from UNIFEM's offices to the newsroom before heading off to basketball practice.

"I'm trying to tell people that the laws are wrong, the traditions are wrong, and something needs to be done about it. Changing the laws does not mean that people are going to be scared or stop what they do, but at least people will think twice about it."

Things have changed since the days when the police asked why she was wasting her time. The law enforcement authorities have formed a family protection unit to deal exclusively with abused women and children, and they have an increased sensitivity to the subject.

"The coroners and pathologists are more aware of this issue," she says. "Now, if something is reported as a suicide or accidental death, they will investigate more to see if the woman was murdered. Now, we need to educate the judges."

Jorgen Lissner, the UNDP resident representative in Jordan who has lent support to the campaign for women's rights in that country, agrees.

"We need to look at the judicial system so that they're not too lenient," he says. "The short to medium-term goal is to work on public attitudes. If only a woman can dishonour a family, something is wrong."

Something is wrong at Juweida prison in Amman. The women here and the Jordanian authorities know it. Out of 191 female inmates, 55 of them haven't committed a crime, but are being held here for their own protection.

The lot of them share four large rooms, which wardens try to divide between convicted criminals and victims of crimes like rape, battery and sexual assault. Otherwise, they share the same facilities, and they all wear the same thick, blue denim prison gowns that seem too heavy for the August heat.

Samira, 21, is here because she ran away with another man when her parents tried to get her to marry her cousin. Ammal, 27, had a boyfriend who promised to marry her, but got her pregnant first. Safa, a 20-year-old with a heart-shaped face and dark circles beneath her pretty eyes, has one of the most heart-wrenching stories of all.

She and her boyfriend are both in the same prison, unable to see each other. Though she's been in love with him since she was 14, her father forced her to marry someone else a year ago. She soon ran away with her boyfriend, and the husband divorced her. But Safa and her true love are still in jail for having an extramarital affair. They have a two-month-old son in state custody.

Her boyfriend's family is trying to help: they want the two to marry, and they hired a lawyer to help set her free. But her father has to approve of the marriage and agree to Safa's release, and for that, he wants a dowry payment.

"My father wants them to pay 500 dinars (about US$730), and they can't afford it," she says. Though her father is willing to set Safa free for a price, she says she's still in danger of being killed by one of her uncles, who are furious over the affair. "My father won't accept the marriage until he gets the money, but my uncles will never accept it."

The authorities, meanwhile, will not set Safa free unless her father signs for her release—and signs a promise that she will not be harmed. Often, the police will attach a penalty to this statement, in which the father promises to pay several thousand dinars if his daughter is killed. But women's advocates complain that such penalties are not usually enforced if the woman ends up dead. In one case, a father reportedly pleaded for his daughter's release, promising that she had been forgiven, but the woman was shot by her brother as soon as they left the prison grounds.

Life in the new shelter, its architects hope, will be different. It will be more a safe house than a locked-down facility, with a garden, workshops, computers, a library and a clinic. Staff will include social workers, a psychologist, and legal counsellor. It will also have a hotline to take calls from women in need of help.

"It's not going to be a prison in a shinier environment," says Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, the regional programme adviser for UNIFEM. "It will also be a job training centre, and we will have many other services to help women."

They will not, at any rate, be behind bars or in uniform. However, since the shelter will need regular police protection and would encounter hostility if placed in an ordinary neighbourhood, it will be built adjacent to the prison, on land provided by the public security department.

While plans for the $1.6 million shelter project get under way, UNIFEM is also spearheading an awareness campaign on domestic violence as part of a regional effort in the Arab world. With help from the Ministry of Education, workshops for students, posters, an art exhibit, and a march through Amman are all being organized.

Jordan may be witnessing more of an evolution than a revolution, but the wheels are in motion.

"That's the ray of hope in Jordan—that at least the government is trying to do something about it," says Rana Husseini. "I'm sure it won't happen right away, but it's a start. It's a good sign." ■

Ilene R. Prusher is the Jerusalem correspondent for the Christian Science Monitor. *Her work has appeared in publications including* Newsday, Philadelphia Inquirer, Financial Times *and* Jerusalem Report.

TESTING THE LIMITS OF FR

By John Maxwell Hamilton

In the woke of communism, Belarus is moving toward a more open society. But old habits die hard, and even the establishment of a free and independent press, like democracy itself, is proving a long, arduous process.

Minsk, Belarus—"Advertising is money, and money is success," says Michael Orletsky. Proud of the nice turn of phrase, the 28-year-old newspaper advertising manager breaks into a winning smile. "Okay," his body language says, "what else do you want to know? We're on a roll here." Despite the problems he and his colleagues in the media face, he may be right.

Belarus is struggling to build a free press. Like other aspects of democratization, it is sometimes a process of trial and error. And giving up power is rarely easy. The government's efforts to control media have drawn international criticism, while many journalists show far more enthusiasm for polemics than for fact-based, balanced news reporting.

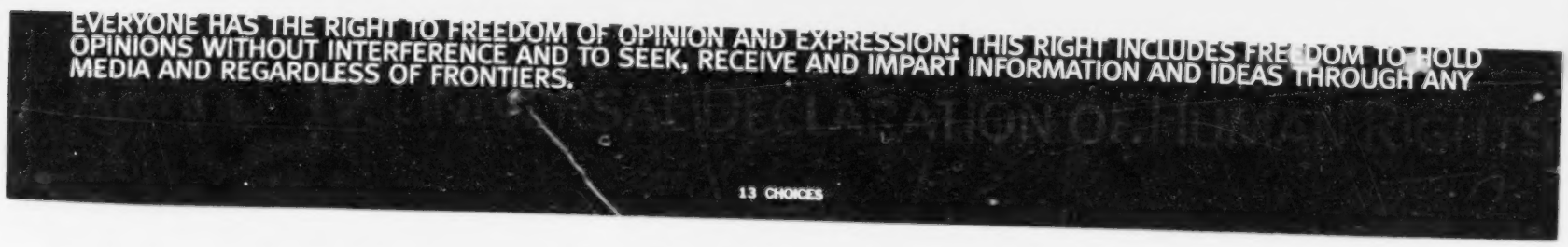
Then, too, there is the challenge of learning the dynamics of the market economy, which comes hard to people who grew up expecting that the government would take care of their basic needs no matter what. As the editor of a financially troubled communist newspaper in Vladivostok ruefully commented to me several years ago, today "even a cat expects to get paid when it crosses the street."

Sitting in his booth at a Minsk computer trade show, where he is wooing potential advertisers, Orletsky looks the part of a young entrepreneur. At his side is a cell phone. And when he explains what he and his company are doing to survive, he pulls back the curtain on a complex process that can lead to a vigorous media system and enhance the flow of information citizens need to be active participants in their own development.

Orletsky works for a media company that took shape about the time the Soviet Union crumbled. The principal owner, Pjotr Martsev, tried a number of ventures, including exporting and importing, but concluded that the one he did best was media. The star publication in his company is the twice-weekly, 20,000-circulation *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta*—which in English means Belarusian Business News.

The way to create a money-making newspaper, Orletsky says, is to create a prestigious newspaper. By this he means a paper that gives readers what they want, which means more people will buy it and,

▲ ***Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta*** **is one of about 200 independent newspapers, magazines and bulletins that have taken root in Belarus since the fall of communism.**


EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION; THIS RIGHT INCLUDES FREEDOM TO HOLD OPINIONS WITHOUT INTERFERENCE AND TO SEEK, RECEIVE AND IMPART INFORMATION AND IDEAS THROUGH ANY MEDIA AND REGARDLESS OF FRONTIERS.

When the government denied the owner of *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta* permission to distribute the newspaper through state-controlled kiosks, he hired women vendors, called *babushkas*, to hawk them independently.

as a result, more businesses will want to purchase advertising space in it.

Orletsky and Martsev say their first rule is to provide readers with reliable information. The newspaper is still grappling with how this should be done, and some of the solutions they have come up with fly in the face of modern journalistic standards. Neither man rules out offering opinions in stories, for example, and Orletsky reveals decidedly unorthodox views about the relationship between advertising and news. If a businessman proposes to pay for a favourable story, which the editors think a good one, the newspaper will publish it. This has happened rarely, he says, but on the few occasions it does, payment is split between management and the reporter.

In addition to *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta*, Orletsky and his five-person staff sell ads for Martsev's new automobile magazine and his weekly tabloid called *Inga*. The weekly, which Martsev says he doesn't like much, is just a break-even proposition. The twice-a-week *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta*, considered one of the best newspapers in the country, is highly profitable. Martsev also has three advertising agencies.

Recounting recent successes, Orletsky notes that he finally convinced Martsev to take him off a fixed salary. Now Orletsky and his staff are paid on a commission basis. The more ads they sell, the more money they make. With his ability to sell ads, Orletsky says, speaking over the pounding rock music piped into the trade show, he will always have a job.

Building a credible press

Virtually all of today's long-established democracies began with a less profound understanding of the dynamics of a free press system than Orletsky possesses only a few years after Belarus has set out on its own.

The early press in the United States did not care about making newspapers into a credible vehicle for advertisers. Owned and subsidized by special interests, newspapers hyperventilated with opinion and personal attacks. If Thomas Jefferson becomes president, reported the *New-England Courant* in 1800, "murder, robbery, rape and adultery and incest will be openly taught and practiced, the air will be rent with cries of distress, the soil soaked with blood and the nation black with crimes."

For all the abuse he took, Jefferson as well as other American Founding Fathers understood that the people's right to choose is essential to political and economic development, and a free press is crucial if people are to know their options.

The US press did not begin to establish modern professional journalism standards until the latter part of the 19th century. The turning point was the rise of an industrial economy, which created a mass audience for both reliable news and consumer advertising. Fact-based reporting developed hand-in-hand with advertising because reputable businesses wanted ads for their products to appear in credible publications.

Whether all countries trying to break from their totalitarian pasts will develop press systems based on the free market that Orletsky relishes so much is far from certain. Free markets—and advertisers—do not spring full blown from the ashes of central planning. In the early 1990s, says Martsev of his own country, "there wasn't a profession of a businessman."

A small, land-locked country, Belarus has been an appendage of Russia for centuries. Thought of as the Soviet Union's "assembly line," it was one of the most advanced states in the region. Many in the current government hope to be reintegrated into the Russian economy.

Even modest economic reform has come slowly. A few people became fabulously rich in the early stages of transforming state companies into private ones. But privatization, which was supposed to involve 8,500 enterprises, has reached only a little over 2,000, and some only partially, according to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Under President Aleksander Lukashenko, who once ran a collective farm, the government has imposed rules that discourage foreign investment. Real incomes have decreased. Some of the most important advertisers in *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta* are companies helping people leave the country.

This is not to say that only a small number of independent newspapers have appeared. On the contrary, typical street kiosks offer an extraordinary array of periodicals. The government estimates that Belarus has some 1,000 newspapers, magazines and bulletins, 200 of which are private.

Martsev welcomes the competition. A slight man who chain smokes and bobs up from his chair to answer the phone or just make a point, he is restless, impatient, and shrewd about the functioning of markets. Occasionally, he says, he helps struggling rivals financially. The proliferation of periodicals, he argues, stimulates reader interest generally, which will be good for him.

At the same time, he admits that the few advertising dollars are spread thinly.

Moreover, state-controlled newspapers have advantages in acquiring advertising that independents do not. They have the largest circulations, which make them more attractive to advertisers. The most politicized segment of the population, which tends to read independent media, is not the richest. Businesses also worry about reprisals if they place ads in media that are critical of the government.

These factors, plus the current economic climate, have made it increasingly difficult for independent media and their owners to get by. "Four years ago, we could say publishing a newspaper was profitable," says Alexander Volvatov, the editor and part owner of *Belorusskaya Gazeta*. "It is not a business nowadays." (Although the name is similar, the *Belorusskaya Gazeta* is not associated with Martsev's paper.)

Svobodnye Novosti, founded in 1991 and one of the oldest independent newspapers in the country, is housed in out-of-the-way, dingy, basement offices. Alexander Ulitenok, the chief editor, is a part owner and acutely aware of his troubled balance sheet. Reporters earn the equivalent of US$150 a month, which he says is about a third of the salary received by counterparts on government newspapers. In countries where salaries are low, reporters routinely take money on the side for writing a favourable story or moonlight for companies and political groups about whom they report. That, Ulitenok says, is the case for his reporters. One way of dealing with the problem throughout the former Soviet Union is to find a rich uncle, usually a company or other special interest, who will quietly subsidize a newspaper.

Another strategy for papers like *Belorusskaya Gazeta* is to rely on international organizations like the Open Society Institute, funded by the Soros Foundation, says Carlos Sherman, vice-president of the International Pen Club in Belarus. Like other human rights advocates in the country, Sherman warmly welcomes contacts with foreigners. He gives visitors to his cramped, bustling offices copies of publications, written in both Russian and English, outlining problems encountered by the local press. Foreign opinion, he realizes, can result in more pressure on the government to support press freedom.

Outside support, however, is a short-term solution at best. As Sherman acknowledges, foundations' priorities change from time to time so that long-term commitments often cannot be counted on. And foundations can't be certain how long they will be allowed to work in a country. The government kicked the Soros Foundation out of Belarus [see page 16], although it still finances some publications as well as Sherman's organization and funds an Internet hook-up project in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The key to establishing a free press, Sherman says, is to develop markets.

Serving the interests of the market

The government's action against Soros, on an apparent pretext of tax law violations, points to yet another challenge for independent newspapers. Leaders in former communist countries are accustomed to the press serving the interests of government. They bridle when they see that a free press is by definition a critical press. In some countries, outspoken journalists are in grave danger. In mid-1998 the editor of the only opposition newspaper in the southern Russian region of Kalmykia was slain. Larisa Yudina's body had a fractured skull and knife wounds. Earlier her apartment had been set on fire.

The fundamental principle underlying a free press is not that the press should have power for itself, but that power secures a basic human right for citizens in a democratic society.

In Belarus, the government has relied on nonviolent tactics to muzzle the media. The government only supports state-owned publications with its advertising money, for example. Channel Eight, an independent television operation that must use government controlled airwaves, sometimes cannot broadcast due to "technical difficulties." At one point, *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta* underwent 23 tax audits. A recent internal government note, which embarrassingly leaked out, urged officials not to give interviews to any independent journalists. Pending legislation would make it illegal to criticize the President. The government has shut down newspapers and jailed journalists.

Similar tactics are employed elsewhere. In Yugoslavia, television stations pay license fees of as much a $15,000 a month. Few have the means to pay these charges for very long. In many newly democratic nations, including Belarus, the state continues to dominate ownership of both radio and television media.

The locus of Belarusian press control is the State Committee on Press, headed by Michail Podgainy. Youthful looking, brusque, and wearing a very correct navy

suit, he is a political survivor. His long government career includes overseeing the communist youth organization. Seven people on Podgainy's staff are responsible for monitoring all of Belarus' newspapers, although he says independent papers get the most attention. A veteran at explaining why the government favours free speech, provided it is "responsible," Podgainy holds up a copy of an independent newspaper. He has circled a paragraph in the middle of the front page. BelaPAN, the country's independent news service, wrote the offending story. It quotes an opposition leader who says that Belarusian soldiers have been sent abroad.

The opposition leader is wrong, Podgainy says. He is sending the story to the lawyers to see if the news service should receive a reprimand for quoting the erroneous statement. After three warnings on such matters, he says, the courts can close down a newspaper.

The high-water mark of journalistic freedom was ten years ago, says Zjanna Litvina, an intense woman who serves as president of the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ). That was when perestroika bloomed throughout the Soviet Union. Since then, she says, journalists have had to struggle more, although they are far better off than under communism.

Under the communists, the only vehicle for expressing opinion was underground literature. Government censors told journalists what they could report and how events should be interpreted. Litvina, who worked for a government radio station, recalls how a censor told her that tracks found along the Belarusian border must be described as those of people coming into the country, not seeking to leave it. The spectre of the Gulag, the Soviet system of forced labour camps, hung over any citizen who contemplated expressing an opinion.

More than censorship

Today's independent journalists don't worry about prior censorship. Podgainy only takes action after the story is published.

Still, say human rights groups in Minsk, the press will not dare to give readers all the news they need when even accurate information can bring government reprisal. "Our citizens don't have choices," laments a member of the Belarusian Helsinki Commission. "They don't know alternatives."

While outside observers decry chilling government policies on the media, they also fret over the quality of reporting. It is common for Belarusian journalists, heady with the feeling that they can speak their minds at last, to use the news pages as a forum for their own opinions. Often they pay little attention to the accuracy of facts they do report.

The fundamental principle underlying a free press is not that the press should have power for itself, but that power secures a basic human right for citizens in a democratic society. This idea of the readers' right to know was foreign to Soviet-style journalism education. A few people like Orletsky and Martsev grasp its significance both as a political issue and a business one. But others do not, which is why Martsev is a supporter of Western journalism training.

Journalists need time to reflect on the meaning and social obligations of their craft, says Elsa Hastad, a UNDP programme officer in Minsk. Hastad oversees a year-long programme that offers workshops for more than 100 journalists with both independent and government publications. Workshop topics range from ethics to marketing. Participants also receive two-week-long internships in Sweden. The project is a cooperative effort with the Swedish Institute for Further Education of Journalists at Kalmar University.

"In order to move from a totalitarian regime to democracy, freedom and independence of the press are essential," says Hastad. "In this process, the press in Belarus has to find a new identity, and that's where UNDP's support comes in."

Newly independent countries like Belarus will have to create their own models for guaranteeing citizens a free flow of information. Whatever those models are, all depend on journalistic enterprise and a willingness to fight for freedom.

When punishing *Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta* a few years ago, the government forbade Martsev to use the state-owned printing house or use the state-controlled kiosk distribution system. Martsev found a printer in Vilnius, Lithuania. Then, to get his newspapers in the hands of readers, he set up his own small tables on the street, each with an umbrella, and hired older women, called *babushkas*, to hawk them. The paper is probably stronger as a result.

As his advertising manager, Michael Orletsky, puts it, "We live according to the laws of the market." ■

John Maxwell Hamilton, a veteran foreign correspondent, is author of four books, including Entangling Alliances: How the Third World Shapes Our Lives. *He is dean of the Manship School of Mass Communication, Louisiana State University.*

ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS

Training for journalists is just one aspect of human rights that UNDP is supporting in Belarus. The organization is also working with the government to implement wide-ranging recommendations made after a review of the country's progress by the Human Rights Committee in Geneva, Switzerland. In late 1997, the committee concluded that the citizens of Belarus lived with political pressure reminiscent of that imposed by the former Soviet Union. The Minsk Centre for UN Studies is holding seminars and workshops on relevant topics, including the human rights aspects of HIV/AIDS, and is training specialists who can bring these issues to the wider public.

Training is also part of a UNDP-supported project initiated by the Open Society Institute. The Institute, funded by the Soros Foundation, installed routers, transmitters and other hardware to improve Internet connections in Belarus. When the Institute's office was told to leave the country, the project continued under the auspices of UNDP to ensure that Belarusian NGOs are hooked up to the Internet and schooled on how to use it effectively. The project contributes to democracy-building, says Pavel Kral, the former UNDP resident representative in Belarus. As a result, he says, the government and NGOs, including the Belarusian Association of Journalists, can now access reliable information from abroad and bring problems inside Belarus to the attention of the outside world.

According to UNDP's Elsa Hastad, at a time when many other government and international bodies have experienced strained relations with the Government of Belarus, the United Nations has maintained lines of communication with top officials while remaining credible with non-government organizations.—*J.M.H.*

Human Rights

WEAPONS AGAINST TYRANNY

By Nadine Gordimer

A Nobel Laureate in literature and UNDP Goodwill Ambassador offers a personal reflection on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Everyone who ponders the Universal Declaration of Human Rights inevitably will give particular attention to those Articles that pertain to circumstances with which he or she is personally involved. As a writer, Article 19 has a special significance for me. Freedom of expression is the oxygen of writers' creativity. But this is not a professional privilege that seeks exclusive protection: literature is one of the most enduring means by which ideas cross frontiers and become universal, but freedom of expression, to impart and receive information "through any media" is the first condition of freedom in civilized governance. Suppression by censorship, banning, imprisonment and even edicts of death continue to exist in many countries, imposed by both secular and religious authorities. Article 19 established incontrovertibly these means as a primary contravention of everyone's birthright to read, to listen, to regard, and speak out.

Article 26 is fundamental to Article 19: its Clauses 1 and 2, "Everyone has the right to education," "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality." Freedom of expression is an empty phrase unless education equips every individual with freedom of the word, the ability to read and write. No other form of expression, oral or visual, can compensate for deprivation of these basic skills in human intercourse, understanding, and the development of the intellect. Although the right to literacy surely is implied in Article 26, it is not specifically named. I believe it ought to be. This Article brings the hope of justice to the millions excluded—by ignorance which is no fault of their own—from participation and benefit in the making of our world.

"It is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, *to rebellion against tyranny and oppression,* that human rights should be protected by the rule of law."

For me, the most important Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has no number, is not an Article at all. It is a paragraph of the Preamble. "Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, *to rebellion against tyranny and oppression,* that human rights should be protected by the rule of law." (My italics.)

I have lived through a time in my own country, South Africa, when this "last resort" compelled the majority of the people to turn to rebellion, first in the form of civil disobedience and passive resistance and finally in the form of armed struggle, against tyranny and oppression that denied them human rights. I have seen how to be compelled to take this last resort not only brings tragic self-sacrifice and suffering to those who assume the burden, even though freedom is finally achieved as a result, but has long-term consequences that threaten the democracy so attained.

When people are deprived over years of any recourse to the provisions of civil society as a means of seeking redress for their material and spiritual deprivations, they *lose the faculty* of using the law when, at last, such recourse is open to them. The result of this conditioning now is fashionably called "the culture of violence"; an oxymoron, for culture implies enlightenment, an aim toward attaining the fullness of life, not its destruction. The tactics of a desperate liberation struggle are all that many people know how to employ. In my country, students dissatisfied with the performance of their teachers retaliate by destroying the equipment of their own schools. Taxi-bus owners, in dispute over transport routes each considers his exclusively, attack one another at gunpoint. Workers forcibly occupy managers' offices and destroy plant as protest against unsatisfactory working conditions and low pay. It takes time and education in, understanding of, the protection of human rights, for a formerly oppressed people to learn to use this protection through the means provided, in civil societies, by the law. Students had no structures to deal with their grievances, before. The means of settling disputes by forming a code for the transport industry was not open to, offered no peaceful resolution to those who had no civil rights of any kind. The denial of the right to form trade unions, over many years, meant that workers' violent reactions to their problems were the only ones that brought results in the political liberation struggle. The paths by which people have the right to be protected by the rule of law, not persecuted by its wrongful application, have to be learned. It is in this that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is, and shall remain the essential document, the touchstone, the creed of humanity that surely sums up all other creeds directing human behaviour, if we are to occupy this world together now and in the 21st century. ■

This essay on human rights, along with the personal voices of three other Nobel Laureates, will also appear in the UN Chronicle *magazine.*

LIVING WITH HIV in POLAND

By Mary Jo McConahay

Beyond the devastating health effects of HIV/AIDS, many infected individuals also confront intense discrimination and other infringements of their human rights. In Poland, respect for the rights of people living with the disease is combined with programmes to contain its spread, and grassroots efforts to combat negative attitudes.

Krakow—Near the curving Wisla River, a bright sun shines down upon the old town's central square, bouncing off church spires and rooftop gargoyles, spilling over sidewalk cafes, warming crowds who stroll the flagstones in summer clothes. It's not apparent at first glance, but this elegant municipal plaza, the largest of medieval Europe, is also a locus where Poles are confronting a very modern epidemic: HIV/AIDS.

Look closer and you can pick out drug users—wearing heavy jackets despite the heat, with pockets to carry their "works." A thin girl with unkempt hair pulls out a used 5-cc syringe, a drop of blood still visible inside. She deposits it in a plastic container at the feet of two young women—social workers sitting on a bench, apparently taking the sun. Quickly, discreetly, one of the professionals reaches into a bicycle basket, then passes the girl a packet containing a clean syringe. Providing clean needles so users are less likely to share is one proven way of reducing the spread of the virus.

Worldwide, sexual transmission is the most common method of contracting HIV, but shooting up drugs with shared needles has been the way it spreads here: of the 5,000 people officially logged as HIV-infected in Poland, most are intravenous drug users. (Sources who observe the epidemic closely estimate the number of infected adults is between 12,000 and 30,000). At the New York office of UNDP's HIV and Development Programme, Peter Gordon, a programme officer, put the Polish case in global context. Last year, 5.8 million persons worldwide became newly infected, UNAIDS* figures show, and 2.3 million died, bringing the epidemic death toll so far to 11.7 million. Globally, some 30.6 million people are now living with the virus or AIDS itself. For these, Gordon emphasizes, health problems are not the only concern: discrimination can be deep. "The epidemic raises issues of morality and stigma," Gordon said. "Notions about innocence and guilt and the attribution of blame have been a serious hindrance to allowing people to respond in a useful way." Landlords deny homes to the infected. Employers fire them for no other reason than the fact they carry the virus. Ordinary medical care may be denied out of fear, by professionals who know that the most basic precautions prevent transmission.

In Poland, from sunny Krakow to rural villages, as in every other country where the epidemic exists, the struggle to protect the human rights of the infected goes hand-in-hand with the effort to treat them, and to stop the disease from spreading.

Landlords deny homes to the infected. Employers fire them for no other reason than the fact they carry the virus. Ordinary medical care may be denied out of fear.

The needle-exchange in the medieval square is a touchstone of the Monar Krakow Drugs Project. It is one of over a dozen grassroots programmes supported by UNDP in Poland that deal with the effects of HIV, efforts intent on changing attitudes and defending the rights of the infected. Some, like Monar, precede the epidemic; most are newer. And some, like the Streetworkers Programme TADA, where staff befriend prostitutes, pass out condoms and information on a shoestring budget, "would not be able to do what we are doing without UNDP assistance," as the programme's Warsaw director said. What they have in common are dedicated people like the young social workers in the square, or Marek Zygadlo, who directs Monar Krakow, and dozens of others I will encounter across this country who live and work among the HIV-infected.

"We're worried because the drug mafia is moving in, beating or threatening those who want to buy elsewhere, or make their own drugs, or quit," Zygadlo said one night on the busy square, concern and frustration on his face, as if he took the new development personally. "This means our clients go into hiding, staying away from places like this, so it's more difficult for us to reach them."

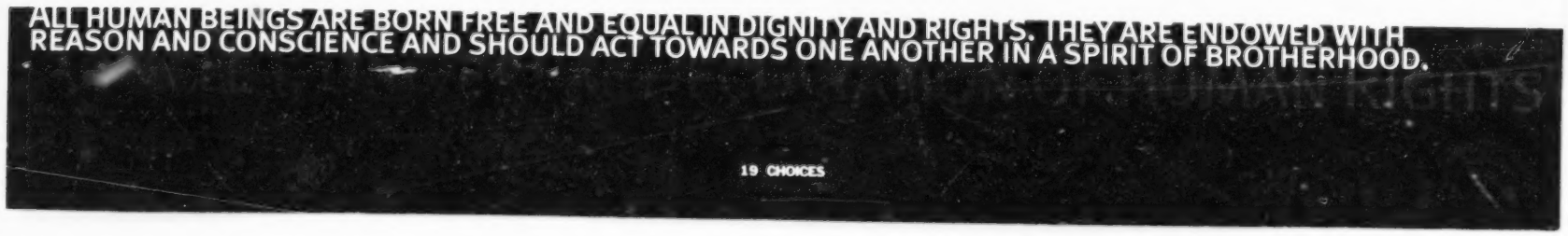
One morning we drive a half-hour east, to visit the Monar Krakow detox and rehabilitation centre at Nowa Huta, a heavy industry zone. Brick factories and smokestacks fade from sight as we turn down a side road, and come upon two houses connected by a path, surrounded by forest. Inside the detox house, nurses carefully monitor the newest clients who sleep away their first days—a time of withdrawal dangerous for muscles—and administer medication prescribed by the on-call doctor. Books and videos—"Men at Work," "Too Young to Die"—fill a den. But most of the action is in another room where light enters through white lace curtains, the hotplate is always on, and resident counsellors dressed down in the manner of their clients offer strong coffee and talk. ("All these counsellors are workaholics," Zygadlo says with a smile.) In this room Marcin, 21, whose closely-shaved head marks him as a recent arrival, slouches into a chair and declares he has "had enough" of drugs after five years on amphetamines, cocaine, LSD and kompot, homemade Polish "heroin." Iwona, 25, displays scarred and ravaged arms, with veins so used up she had begun shooting into muscle before arriving here a few days before. "My boyfriend—he's an addict too—is in prison, so after detox, this may be the time to try the rehabilitation centre next door," she says, the struggle to look decisive tightening her pallid face. "I know if I use the stuff again once I'll use it the next time, and the next...."

What helps: an atmosphere where rights are respected, and support for those feeling weak available—not only from staff, but fellow residents.

"When clients find out they are HIV-positive—ten out of 28 in the rehab house now—they say, 'My life is over.' Then they look around at people they know, here in this same house, who have been living with HIV, even working at jobs outside, and see their lives are not over at all," said Zygadlo. "We have access to specialists, and know about the latest in treatments, and we say, 'Look, this is what you can do.'"

◂The photograph opposite and those on the following pages show residents of Dom Ciepla, a Warsaw community of about three dozen people, almost all of whom are living with HIV or AIDS.

**UNAIDS is the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. It is co-sponsored by six UN agencies, including UNDP.*


ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE BORN FREE AND EQUAL IN DIGNITY AND RIGHTS. THEY ARE ENDOWED WITH REASON AND CONSCIENCE AND SHOULD ACT TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER IN A SPIRIT OF BROTHERHOOD.

LIVING WITH HIV in POLAND

Wherever such programmes exist, much of the challenge remains in reaching out to those at risk.

"Not me, no rehabilitation programme, no cutting my hair, I can get off drugs on my own," said Peter, 32, who has been shooting up for 16 years, ever since a cousin introduced him to drugs in his family home. He doesn't want to be tested for HIV. His face and neck are splotched with patches of raw-looking skin, but Peter is admired as a kind of hero in the local drug underground: when cooking kompot exploded in his kitchen, addict friends jumped out the window, but he braved flames to rescue a two-year-old boy whose mother was among those who jumped. When I first met him, Peter had laughingly said he went through accidental "dry detox" in the hospital, recovering from the burns, and would try to stay drug-free. When I last saw him, he said he was "still clean" after 14 days. But his friends, Peter said, had been gently hounding him to "have a little, just once, out of friendship."

Living here is the way to be healthy. The group is strong.—Kazimierz, 40, Dom Ciepla resident, HIV-positive for eight years.

From Krakow, the blue Wisla flows some 500 kilometres north, sweeping past old battlements and modern cities, to the Polish capital, Warsaw. There in a leafy suburb is a UNDP-supported community where 30 adults and three children, almost all living with HIV or AIDS, struggle to be the kind of friends to each other that Peter does not yet have. I greet a resident named Krzysztof, perhaps because he is unsure how an outsider feels about physical contact, about the traditional Polish gentleman's kiss on the hand, he only takes the tips of my fingers and bows, stopping short. Yet moments later I watch Krzysztof uninhibited, changing bandages on the suppurating leg sores of a 58-year-old resident, encouraging the fellow—"It's time now, Marian"—to take his pills.

The Brotherhood of Friends' "Domu Ciepla" (House of Warmth) looks like any other on the block. But for residents it is refuge and community. This is the kind of place that solves, in a very small way, the terrible question of "Where to go?"—faced by those who want to live clean, but need help.

"The best is to live within a family, but mine kicked me out when I told them I was HIV-positive," said Krzysztof, 34, when he finished the bandages. Pictures hung on the wall: the Sacred Heart, a white horse, Marilyn Monroe. Krzysztof looked resplendent in a Hawaiian shirt, at ease with Marian and other residents. "This is my family now," he said.

At Dom Ciepla special relationships flower. Roman, 43, and Halina, 38, have fallen in love, says director Antoni Kraus, knocking on another door. "I built this room as an extension to the hospice wing, intended for the very ill," Kraus says, shrugging his shoulders in mock frustration. "But yesterday I decided to give it to them." For all her delight in her new situation, Halina wants most to talk about her children. They are a boy and a girl, not infected, left in the care of her mother. Halina too has felt discrimination from quarters where it might have been least expected—from professional health workers and, like Krzysztof, from family.

"I remember my heart was breaking about how to tell them, but a nurse told them first: 'Your mother has AIDS; she will die.'" Halina's eyes look bitter, then sad with tears. "My own mother is afraid of AIDS. But the last time I visited her house, my son stood up before both of us and said to me, 'Mom, give me a glass of

water, and he drank from it. 'See, I'm not afraid,' he said."

Sometimes, in some places, intravenous drug users and the HIV-infected are still considered society's trash; in fact, members of communities like this one are models of fortitude, with an appreciation for the treasure of every new day of life that eludes many of us who are not ill. Perhaps that is because they have found the support of individuals—like Zygadlo in Krakow, or Kraus in Warsaw.

"Now everybody pitches in, but when I began this house ten years ago I had to say, 'You cook tomorrow, and you sweep,' and residents would reply, 'I can't...I'm sick.'" recalls Kraus, a fit-looking man in his forties, who readily admits he once used drugs. "I live with people 24 hours a day and, yes, it's a long process, but I see how they can change."

Partly too, fortitude comes from hope the infected can live longer, thanks to a house policy of no drug use, good food, minimum smoking and drink—and the support of housemates with the same virus, who often need each others' help. Because this is an orderly environment, where medication can be administered correctly and monitored, residents have another advantage: they are candidates for some of the very few (about 300) advanced and even experimental "cocktail" treatments that the government, for the moment, can provide. Krzysztof, planning an evening out with friends from town, said he has been infected 14 years. Alojzy, 47, "a hippie since the days of 1968," infected seven years, is packing for his annual trip to meet friends at the pilgrimage site of Our Lady of Czestochowa, a "hippie tradition," he insists.

But perhaps the greatest source of fortitude comes from inside. Leokadia, 43, has a pixie haircut and the slight body of a 12-year-old, but a manner that says she has seen the worst, and come back from it. She once used drugs for a decade, she said, sick and often homeless, caring for a son and daughter, who are uninfected. "The social worker seemed to have no problem with the drugs, but when she discovered I had HIV, she took the children away," Leokadia said. "She told me—wrongly, I now know—that 'You can infect them just by living together.'"

As in most countries, when the disease appeared in Poland, first public reactions were fearful and hurtful. "Once they get it, it's just 'bring in the Holy Water,'" a typically lurid magazine piece quoted a nurse saying. Some clergy did nothing to discourage the idea that the illness was a visitation from God, punishment for immoral behaviour.

Leokadia and Krzysztof from Dom Ciepla work to change attitudes toward AIDS: Krzysztof lectures groups of future teachers, Leokadia at intensive workshops for teachers and health workers, sponsored by UNDP.

"Mostly," says Krzysztof, "those I talk to are surprised people with HIV can lead normal lives."

Poland is in transition, going places, but there is stress and strain in the process. Transformation is not just economic, but in institutions, too. An important thing about this HIV work is that it builds civil society capacity to deal with a range of problems in an open-minded way.—Matthew Kahane, UNDP resident representative in Poland.

When UNDP and the Polish Ministry of Health and Social Welfare agreed last year to jointly support projects dealing with the epidemic, each decided to commit half a million dollars. In fact, UNDP Poland considers the effort so important it devotes more funding to HIV/AIDS issues than any other single programme. Often, the activities of these smaller organizations might be hard to fund otherwise in a conservative country where issues around HIV are still not well understood and public health money remains scarce: an AIDS information hot line in Warsaw, run by trained staff—some of whom are themselves infected; an anonymous testing centre in Koszalin, on the Baltic Sea; a chapter of LAMBDA, a gay rights group; a clinic run by a pioneering doctor in the southern city of Chorzow, where 90 per cent of patients are HIV-positive and where methadone treatment helps wean them from addiction so they can be treated for AIDS, and where the doctor is god-fathering the formation of a rights group of the infected. The UNDP/Ministry programme, called "Managing the Social and Public Health Consequences of HIV and AIDS," has trained and certified more than 100 non-medical HIV

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educators, such as the therapists and counsellors I met in Nowa Huta. It is set to train some 1,500 doctors, nurses and midwives this year in new treatment methods, counselling skills to use before and after patients are tested, and safety measures during routine procedures. (For many, the sessions are the first occasion to learn about the psychological and legal requirements around testing, and about patients' rights.)

Former programme coordinator Kasia Malinowska-Sempruch says the interest in HIV issues is key in developing awareness of the human rights of the infected.

"The workshops, for instance, provide a space for people to talk—we could have had professors go in and lecture, but we didn't," she said at the UNDP office in Warsaw. "Questions come up, which people say they always wanted to ask, but felt intimidated to propose in other circumstances." Group sessions provide an "entry point" for issues that reach beyond HIV, said Malinowska. Sexual abuse as an important public health issue is being addressed "thanks to" the HIV workshops, she added. When health workers begin to see the need for gloves, in another example, they proceed to discuss ways to negotiate safer working conditions with the boss. "Our priority is issues associated with HIV/AIDS—homelessness, prisons, empowering medical and social workers, for instance, in the workplace. It's about what people themselves think is important about living with HIV."

Malinowska's government counterpart, Arkadiusz Nowak, a 32-year-old Catholic priest, is an adviser to the Minister of Health and to President Aleksander Kwasniewski on AIDS and drug issues. When he was a youngster growing up in the industrial region of Silesia, in southwest Poland, Nowak recalled, friends were drug users. "Some perceive it as a pathology, but I saw it among them as an illness," Nowak said in a Warsaw interview. Entering an order that ministers to the sick, Nowak said he chose work with such intravenous drug users, soon discovering "large numbers" had AIDS. When he helped open a house where 12 infected persons could live together, neighbours protested. It was a typical example of an occasion when the human rights of the infected were on the table. "I had to engage in long discussions, telling the neighbours there was no reason to be afraid, no medical reasons people with HIV should not live there, that the infected had the same rights to live in the neighbourhood as anyone else. Sometimes, the discussions ended successfully."

As a priest, Nowak can find himself regarded as a voice of the Polish Roman Catholic Church, an institution that carries singular weight. For centuries, churches played a role in safeguarding national culture, sometimes the only place the Polish language could be spoken. In the recent period of totalitarian rule that ended in 1989, the Church represented Polish resistance. Nowak is often called upon to explain—even defend—Church stands on HIV prevention. Take condoms, which many studies suggest are a deterrent to sexual transmission of the virus, effective enough to be promoted in health campaigns—especially among those who will have several partners, or have sex with persons they don't know well. Condom use simply runs counter to Church belief that the place of sex is within marriage. "The Church has chosen the prevention method that is more effective—faithfulness. It's possible," said Nowak. "It's the line, but it also helps a person from becoming infected."

It is children who experience some of the worst effects of rights violations stemming from the epidemic.

There is little disagreement that the Church lobbies for housing and medical rights of those with HIV/AIDS, demands dignity in their treatment, receives the infected into hospices, invites doctors to speak on Church radio. But now that Poland's transition to democracy is well under way, some question how deep a role the Church should have in shaping national policy issues, such as those around health. Nevertheless, the fact remains that a majority of Poles look to the Church for guidance, and any programme that successfully targets the epidemic keeps this in mind.

As Nowak rushed off, "to a meeting with the President," I recalled the words of a communicable diseases specialist at a provincial HIV-testing centre. She was between appointments with an infected mother bringing her four-year-old son for examination (negative), and two nervous-looking teenage boys. "As a doctor I have to tell people that condoms, for instance, can help protect you from HIV, but as a person I don't give my private opinion," the doctor said. "We are Catholics, but the Polish nation needs to be educated on these delicate issues, in order to get a complete picture."

At the AIDS Diagnosis and Therapy Centre in Warsaw, Dr. Andrzej Horban, among the country's most well-known specialists, has a finger on the pulse of the epidemic nationwide.

"We have been able to control it in a way many countries were not able to do," he said. Horban described a coincidence: on the same day the 1981 government declared martial law to quell resistance, sealing borders against outsiders and nearly preventing travel abroad, a landmark article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* reached Poland, explaining the means of transmission of the AIDS disease, which had once seemed mysterious.

"We had time," Horban said, to test blood supplies so hemophiliacs and others would not be at risk from transfusion, to introduce programmes of public information. Importantly, largely through Monar, many drug users were tested early. In October 1988, Horban said, when epidemiologists verified the first case of an HIV-positive intravenous drug user, "we knew a crest was coming." After the peak year 1992 (800 new known cases), there have been fewer annually, despite the fact that doctors recognize HIV more now, referring more patients to centres such as Horban's.

That was the good news.

In 1998, the number of new reported cases per month appears to be jumping — 70 in April alone. If such numbers continue, and Horban and other doctors say they expect they will, new cases are likely to match the peak years, and climb beyond. Why?

One reason may be a reflection of the very openness Poles have long sought.

Markets are booming, and so is travel in and out of the country, commercial and tourist. Long-distance truckers cross Poland between western and eastern Europe, and the number of sex workers on the routes has risen too. The number of sexually transmitted diseases, one indicator of where HIV will appear, has increased precisely along these highways.

Dr. Horban warned no single factor—such as prostitution—may be the cause of HIV increase. He pointed to neighbours where numbers are soaring astronomically: Ukraine, the worst-affected in the region, from 1,500 cases in 1994, UNAIDS experts estimate, to 110,000 today; the Russian Federation, from 158 in 1994, to 40,000 today, mostly injecting drug users; a similar pattern in Belarus. The virus recognizes no national borders, and "the echo from neighbours," as Horban put it, is bound to reverberate.

"We are now under the 'explosion' level," Horban said deliberately in his hospital office. "But we also know it's silent before the thunderclap."

As the Wisla nears the end of its 1,000-kilometre journey through Poland, flowing toward the Bay of Gdansk in the north, it travels through a countryside punctuated by myriad lakes, some open and silvery in the sun, others surrounded by birch as if kept secret, reached only by dirt tracks. Near such a hidden lake another community, supported by UNDP and the Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme, thrives. Hectares of organic fruits and vegetables grow all around (it is self-sufficient in food), and storks fly overhead. The settlement of Wandzin, named for a nearby village, is a reminder that more than a quarter of the Polish population still makes a living from farming—the highest proportion in Europe—and that HIV/AIDS too, is present in small towns, and rural corners.

It is also a reminder of how many children are affected. At Wandzin, a mother strolls a gravel path pushing a red baby buggy; another tends strawberries in a hothouse with her child resting snug nearby in an infant-carrier. Some ten million children will have lost their mothers or both parents to AIDS worldwide by the year 2000. Last year alone, 590,000 youngsters under age 15 became newly infected. It is children who experience some of the worst effects of rights violations stemming from the epidemic.

"At first, teachers in the village school feared our children, believing they could infect others," said Wandzin director Donat Kuczewski. Patiently, painstakingly, Kuczewski and others sat down with farmers—other parents—and teachers, explaining the means of HIV transmission, of the rights of the Wandzin children to an education equal to that of any other Polish child. Since then, Kuczewski says, "they never commented again."

Parents report doctors refuse to treat HIV-infected children for ordinary childhood diseases. "When she had a cold or fever our local doctor wouldn't see her," said the mother of a seven-year-old infected girl from a southern town, "so we had to take the train nine hours to Warsaw." Even sympathetic physicians say it's especially difficult to find a dentist who will treat the small ones.

Yet for infected adults, it is often their children who provide the hope to go on, even beyond the time when the disease might have been thought to claim them.

"It's because of my three-year-old son that I became serious about stopping drugs," said a carpenter named Stefan, infected with HIV. We sat on a bench at Wandzin overlooking the lake as he rested from work, roofing a new hospice. Stefan began taking drugs in the orphanage where he spent his childhood; met his wife, Katarzyna, in a detox centre five years ago; this year, they came to Wandzin as a family. "It's safe here, like being under an umbrella," he said. Stefan's arms might once have been stronger, but they were misshapen now, red and brutally scarred—injected drugs, kompot explosion. He said he had lost 18 kilogrammes in recent months, and while this could be a sign of AIDS, he insisted he didn't know why he was becoming thin, and that he felt "good."

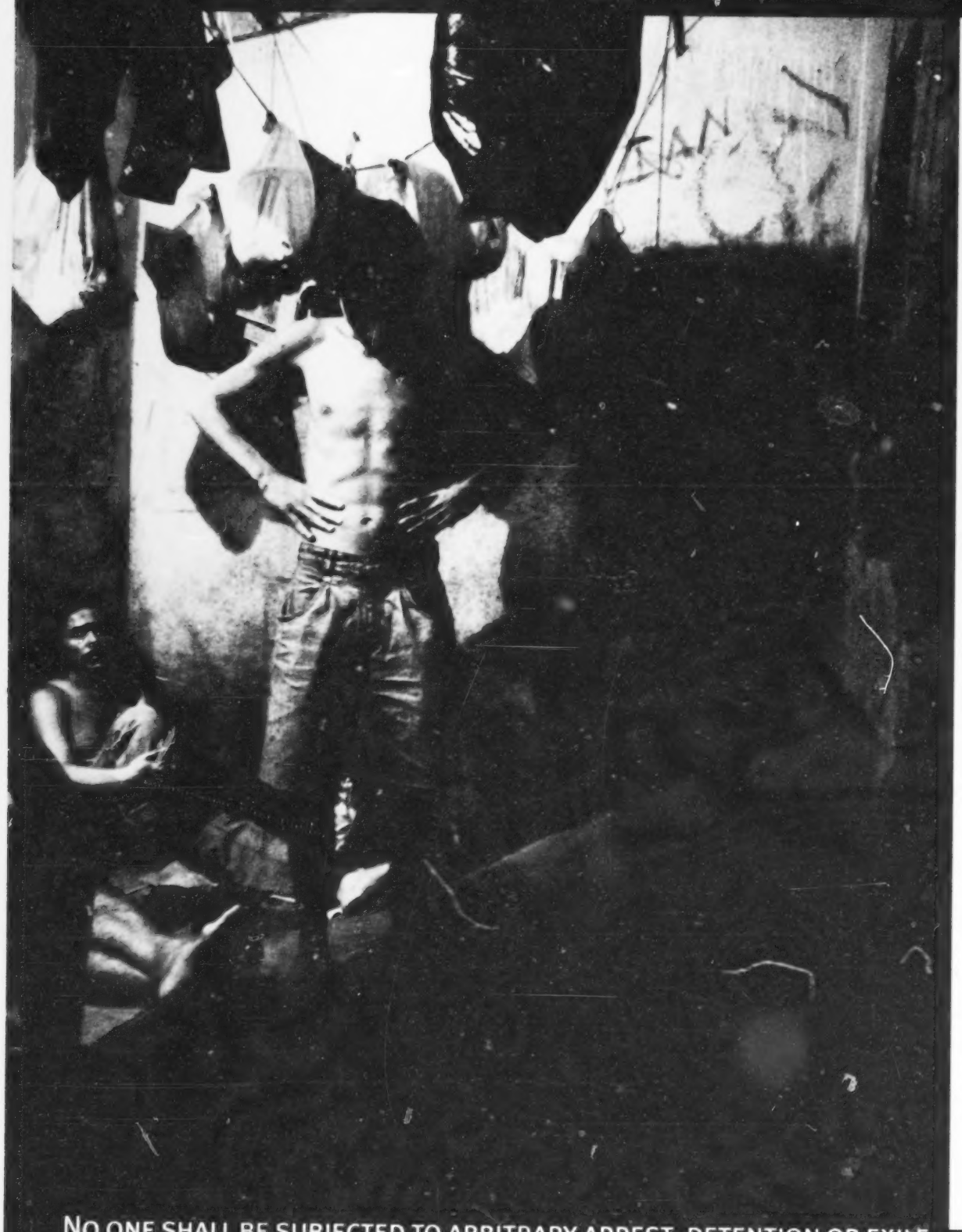
"This is the first time in my life I have someone to live for, my wife, and the boy," Stefan said. "That roof will be finished in two weeks. Then I'll cut planks and put wood on the new walls." ■

Mary Jo McConahay is an editor for the Pacific News Service. She is a contributor to other publications, including Newsday, San Francisco Examiner, National Catholic Reporter *and* Sierra *magazine.*

JUSTICE

By Rita Neubauer

Nicaragua's overloaded justice system and antiquated prisons—considered an affront to human rights even by law enforcement officials themselves—are undergoing reforms essential to restoring public confidence.



Managua—A crime committed out of desperation is hardly a crime at all. At least that is the way Reynaldo Sotelo sees it. That he was sentenced to five months for robbery and for using a false name is something the 26-year-old Nicaraguan can accept. But what he can't accept is that he has already spent 15 months in Police Station III in Managua.

"Perhaps they have forgotten my case," he says despairingly. For months, Sotelo has been trying to secure his release from a backlogged justice system, to no avail. He can't afford a lawyer, and doesn't know where else he can go for help. "Please take note of my name," he pleads with visitors.

Esperanza Pérez, who shares a 25-square-metre cell in the same jail with 11 other women, is close to hysteria. "This guy," complains the beleaguered 55-year-old, "was trying to rape me. Now I've been in prison for three months and he's running around free." Esperanza's "crime": she hit her attacker over the head with a wooden club. When he filed a complaint of assault, she wound up in jail.

The two cases are extreme and not representative of the entire Nicaraguan justice system. However the country's own chief of police admits that "every day, the worst violations of human rights are committed in our own police jails." A visit to two

◀**Detainees in Police Station III hope to wind up in the infirmary (left) because it is the only cell with direct sunlight.**

facilities—the police lock-up in Managua and a prison outside the capital—and talks with prison directors, wardens, human rights activists and prisoners themselves, corroborate his statement.

"In places, conditions are like those of the seventeenth century," says Carmelo Angulo, resident representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Nicaragua. A US$10 million UNDP-supported project, funded by the Governments of Denmark, France, Japan, Norway and Spain, and given full backing by the Government of Nicaragua, is seeking to change that. The assistance is aimed at reforming penal laws, which date back to the previous century, as well as upgrading the prisons, including medical and food services. Prison staff will receive training in internationally accepted standards of treatment of inmates. Rehabilitation programmes will also be introduced.

The urgency of the situation is clear to anyone who sets foot into one of the detention centres. Like entering the catacombs, a visit to Police Station III reveals a world in which mere survival is everything. Behind dark iron doors, the cells are pitch black. One or two small holes in the ceiling are the only source of light and air, which is heavy with a sweetish stench. The "beds" are slabs of concrete without mattresses or sheets. In the corner, a hole in the floor—the toilet.

Many of those incarcerated are unemployed adolescents who joined neighbourhood gangs (a recent phenomenon in Nicaragua) and were arrested for loitering. About 70 per cent of those arrested in Nicaragua are eventually found innocent. Yet most have no idea how long they will spend in jail.

The first rehabilitation centre for adolescents, to open next year, will not only focus on reintegrating the young people back into society. It will also provide skills training to improve their chances of earning a living once they are released. And in the long run, it should help reduce the number who return to jail. The prisons today are filled to capacity, says Erving Sandino, director-general of Nicaragua's prison system. The police jails, where detainees are supposed to spend a maximum of 48 hours, are bursting. As a result, up to 2,500 people often spend months in the tomb-like confines.

Space is not the only problem. In a country that is recovering from civil war, and among the poorest in the hemisphere, financial resources are scarce. The 1998 national prison budget totals $4.2 million, or $2.80 a day for each of the roughly 4,000 inmates. This must cover food and maintenance of the prisoners as well as the wages of more than 1,000 officials. And it does not include care of the 2,500 inmates of the local police jails, which receive even less financial support—about 40 US cents per person per day.

Under the Sandinista government, which ruled until 1990, there were fewer incarcerated criminals. Most inmates were political prisoners, whose living conditions were scrutinized by the International Red Cross and both national and international human rights organizations. Since the end of the nine-year civil war, and the change of government in 1990, support from the International Red Cross has ceased. Today, Minister of the Interior Jose Alvarado proudly states that there is "not a single political prisoner" in Nicaragua. Meanwhile the crime rate has tripled. Of an estimated 4,000 prisoners today, close to half are behind bars for robbery and bodily harm, nearly a third for murder, 18 per cent for rape and four per cent for drug offenses.

For those incarcerated, it is tough to get by without help from family members, who typically bring extra food and clean clothes to their loved ones. Most unfortunate are those like 20-year-old Manuel, convicted of murder, who has been abandoned by his family. Manuel is the quintessential Nicaraguan prisoner: male, between 19 and 24 years of age, and behind bars for the first time. Manuel is one of many who had little chance of a regular job, who grew up in a culture of violence, and sought to escape from hunger through crime.

Vilma Nuñez, one of the most prominent human rights activists in Nicaragua, complains of the "difficult and dramatic situation" her country finds itself in, and describes the prison population as a "mirror image of Nicaraguan society." Indeed, eight years after a conflict that polarized communities and claimed 65,000 human lives, normalization has been a painstaking process.

The current government of Arnoldo Aleman has a grip on the macroeconomic situation. Billions of dollars in aid are flowing into the country. But the so-called "trickle-down effect" is scarcely felt by the country's poor.

By decentralizing resources and decision-making power, the government is striving to foster development in the country's poorest and most remote areas. Included in this process is the revamping of the country's justice system—an undertaking also supported by UNDP and the international community. With $7 million from the Government of Sweden, judges and court officers are receiving professional training. More than 100 *Casas de la justicia*, or "Houses of justice," have been built in every municipality to try cases.

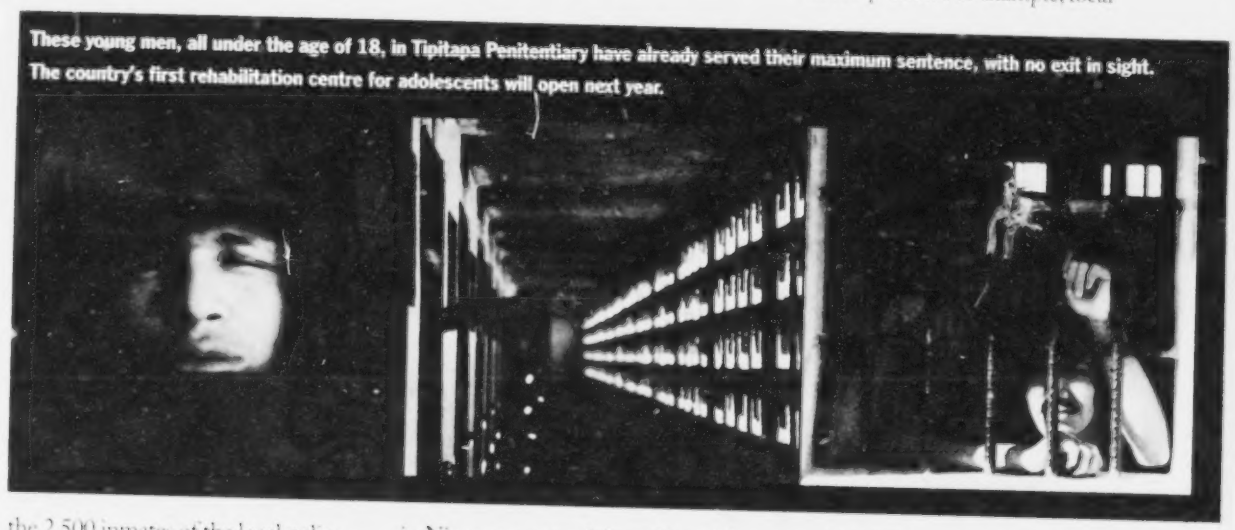
"The presence of a house of justice means that the population has easier access to the judges," says Alvaro Herdocia, a UNDP programme officer. And that, he adds, may bring more confidence in the justice system.

In the post-war years, the processing of court cases—both criminal and civil—has been exceptionally slow, which has undermined confidence in the system and has had a negative impact on the country's overall development. For example, local and foreign investors have been reluctant to pour capital into Nicaraguan businesses because ownership of nearly a third of the country's properties are in dispute; many of the cases are stuck in the courts. Under the Sandinistas, land was nationalized, and now former owners are demanding that it be returned to them.

Nicaragua is still in a difficult transition. And many people, including Reynaldo Sotelo and Esperanza Perez in Police Station III, are feeling the pain. But there is hope.

"The work of reconstruction is under way," says UNDP's Carmelo Angulo. "Thus it is all the more important for the international community to support this process. And cornerstones in it are the reform of the justice and prison systems." ■

Rita Neubauer is Central America correspondent for the German newspaper, Frankfurter Rundschau.



These young men, all under the age of 18, in Tipitapa Penitentiary have already served their maximum sentence, with no exit in sight. The country's first rehabilitation centre for adolescents will open next year.

NOTEBOOK

HARD TIMES

While fierce social disruption and intractable, heart-rending poverty prevail in many parts of the world, no region has suffered such steep economic declines and social reversals in the 1990s as the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. According to *Poverty in Transition?*, a new UNDP report, these countries have experienced the sharpest declines in income and life expectancy of any countries on Earth. The number of people who have been "pushed into poverty," the report states, is greater than the combined total population of France, United Kingdom, Netherlands and all the Scandinavian countries. Poverty, which under communism had been "a limited phenomenon," is now at "the centre of political debate."

Poverty in Transition? was written by a team of specialists and was based in part on national "human development reports" from 28 countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the former Soviet Union (FSU). Beyond the overview the report gives of life in these formerly communist societies, a recurrent theme emerges: the difficulty of measuring pain, the limitations of statistics. Reviewing declining life expectancy (particularly among men), health care crises and economic hardship—referred to gallantly as "the misfortunes of history"—the authors volunteer that these phenomena are immensely difficult to quantify, particularly under conditions of transition. The shift from "a system that encourages overreporting" to one that "encourages underreporting," and that has built-in incentives to hide some economic activities from the government, meant that in the 1990s, statistical authorities were "forced to make expert guesses" when trying to measure real GNP.

This complex discussion, however, finally arrives at one of UNDP's central priorities: governance. The key message of the report is that while the state should and must shrink after communism, a great deal depends on its ability to remain credible.

In the absence of a credible state, the report warns, "liberalization can lead to massive corruption, private monopolies, capital flight out of the country, excessively rapid growth of inequalities and a lack of trust in the market due to financial fraud." There will be "pyramid schemes, banking collapses, lack of law and order."

Yet as the authors admit, it is "easier to see the effects of a credible state" than to "define precisely what it constitutes." As countries throughout the world make the transition from centrally planned to market economies, confronting this dilemma becomes increasingly urgent.

A social and political framework that protects assets and lessens anxiety about the market system helps a society to move in a promising direction. But, as the authors of this publication state, progress means more than the successful introduction of market reforms. The variables are far too complicated. Nor should any single policy be thought of as a recipe. Those who oppose "shock therapy," they explain, would be uncomfortable with the progress made by Poland and Viet Nam. "Similarly, opponents of 'gradualism' in reform may find the case of Uzbekistan and China difficult to argue against." Nor is inattention a solution. "As recent evidence from Bulgaria and Romania shows, procrastination is not a remedy."

Over and over, the report acknowledges that assessing the human impact of transition in a meaningful way involves enduring endless qualifications, wrestling with slippery definitions and accepting "a certain level of arbitrariness."

The authors first deliver the frightening news that the transition economies of the FSU and the CEE grew less than Africa and experienced greater inflation and rising inequity than Latin America. Up to 45 per cent of their populations could be counted as poor in 1993-1995. But later there is this: "Socio-economic suffering has been considerable and a substantial category of poor households have emerged. Despite the reversals, the level of poverty is not comparable to countries such as Bangladesh or many in sub-Saharan Africa. That is not the point." Poverty, one comes to see, is measured within a society and against previous conditions. Transnational comparisons can be misleading, useless.

The report also makes the alarming assertion that the life expectancy of Russian men is now lower than that of men in Egypt, India and Bolivia (a gender gap of about 14 years means that Russia is also on its way to becoming "a nation of widows"), and that the entire FSU and CEE faces a mortality and health crisis that "has no precedent in recent European history during peace time."

But the authors later quote analysts who argue that it is misleading to assume that the health and mortality crisis in the FSU has occurred during peace time, since "at least during the pre-transition phase, the Cold War provoked a massive and unprecedented production of weapons, which resulted in the strangulation of the civilian sector." And that, "Even since 1989, it is misleading to assume a peace time situation, for the rise of nationalism has ignited civil wars and ethnic conflicts." As ways of understanding relative progress are explored, the impact of wars is deemed a crucial variable.

Poverty in Transition? is in its own way alarming. But it is careful not to suggest hopelessness. The report makes a distinction between "velvet" and "iron"

Children in Albania, where massive political upheavals have been accompanied by growing poverty.

"We are all different. We don't have to be alike," is the message of a one-minute television public service announcement targeted to youth in Brazil, Chile, the Dominican Republic and Paraguay. This cartoon and others like it were produced under the auspices of a regional "Citizenship and Ethics Project," supported by UNDP, which seeks to promote diversity, human rights and other aspects of good governance.

transitions, pointing out that in the FSU and CEE, unlike many other parts of the world, even the current poor may have significant assets accumulated over a lifetime or achieved through privatization. Once a society has survived the early ruptures, they believe, the economic future is brighter. Transitional poverty, they say, "is the price to be paid for economic dynamism and effective poverty relief in the long run."

Essentially the authors are pointing out that transition to a market economy is not without great human suffering and social peril—and that only a credible state, "which is the balancing force of liberalization," can shore up the society. They don't only describe, they address policy initiatives. For example, reducing the role of the state "while increasing its credibility in many new areas and some traditional ones" is an agenda that they believe international organizations (including UNDP) must support.

For a copy of *Poverty in Transition?*, contact Omar Noman, Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS, UNDP, 16th floor, One UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017; fax: (212) 906-6595; e-mail: omar.noman@undp.org ■

— *Ellen Posner*

TALKIN' ABOUT MY GENERATION

The young and the elderly are the two fastest growing segments of the world's population. Yet, by and large, their views and opinions are not taken into account by policymakers, who are concentrated in the 36- to 60-year-old age group. That fact alone means "that we are probably making the wrong decisions," says Inge Kaul, director of UNDP's Office of Development Studies and programme chair of the "Global Meeting of Generations."

Sponsored by 15 non- and inter-governmental organizations, including UNDP and the International Development Conference, the Global Meeting of Generations is a four-year effort to open an all-inclusive dialogue on the challenges of the new millennium. According to conference organizers, the process could be our best hope for charting a new course for human development in the next century.

People between the ages of 15 and 24 now number over one billion. They live mostly in developing countries and constitute the largest generation of youth in history. At the same time, advances in health care have extended the lives of millions of people, and the ranks of the elderly will soon outnumber the young in post-industrial societies.

"There's a low level undeclared war between generations," says Robert Berg, conference chair. "We can either ignore these constituencies or try to embrace them and treat them as assets."

In nine countries, national dialogues have been held on issues including human rights, the environment, technology, communications, peace, governance, the private sector, and international cooperation. Over the next year, similar meetings will take place in another 42 countries, involving a cross-section of society spanning several generations.

On 13-15 January 1999, in Washington, DC, the first of two international meetings will focus on strategies to bring such discussions into mainstream decision-making, and to translate goals into action.

According to Berg, the Washington meeting is expected to attract about 2,500 people, about half from countries outside the United States. Participation will also be encouraged through the Global Meeting's website (www.idc.org/gmg).

As much as this process is about finding new ideas and vision, it is also about finding future leaders, in both the public and private sectors. A "Common Futures Forum," to take place directly prior to the Washington conference, will bring together about 75 "social entrepreneurs"—a select group of international activists who have already started organizations, campaigns and caucuses to better our world. Although the median age of these social entrepreneurs is 27, Berg says they've already had a "lifetime of achievements." Over the next three years, they will seek to develop projects in their own communities that reflect the ideas and challenges aired in the Global Meetings.

Kurt Worral-Clare, from South Africa, is one such social entrepreneur who is working to improve the situation of children in his country. While South Africa has a new constitution that affords, in theory, all kinds of human rights, he says, these are not being applied on the streets. "Only the rich or the very poor—who qualify for legal aid—can get the help they need to enforce the laws," he says. Participation in the Common Futures Forum will give him greater standing in his community—"a little oomph," says Worral-Clare—to help him see his projects through. In his case, this means pushing for the creation of a government ministry for children to give youth a voice in government. He is also working on a series of reforms to improve the way that police and legal systems deal with children. Involvement in the Futures Forum, he says, should open doors in obtaining information that is not easily accessible.

For Inge Kaul, the Global Meeting of Generations is about establishing intergenerational equity, which is sorely lacking. For example, inherited financial wealth in the industrialized countries was created in part at the expense of the global environment, she says, "a debt that young ones today will have to pay off in the future."

Rather than holding a conference about a specific issue, adds Kaul, the Global Meeting is "about creating political space for youth and the elderly" to speak out about their concerns. Just as women have already "elbowed" their way to the table, she says, the same can be true for other groups that are far from the centres of power.

"In trying to resolve the generation gap, do we develop some sort of solidarity?" asks Kaul. "Or do we leave it up to each individual to try their luck?"

For more information, contact the Global Meeting of Generations in Washington, DC, tel: (202) 884-8580; fax: (202) 884-8499; e-mail: idc@idc.org ■

— *Daniel Shepard*

MATTERS OF FACT

Information is drawn from the *Human Development Report 1998*, commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme. The report is published in English by Oxford University Press (paperback ISBN 0-19-512459-6; hardbound 0-19-512458-8), and in nine other language editions by a variety of publishers.

Getting and spending. One child born in New York City, Paris or London will **consume, waste** and pollute more in a lifetime than as many as 50 children born in the average developing country. The wealthiest 20% of the world's people use 58% of the world's energy and consume 45% of all **meat** and **fish**. They own 87% of the world's **vehicles** and have access to 74% of all telephone lines. › Poor households typically spend more than half of their income on **food**. Still, about one-fifth of the 4.4 billion people living in developing countries are **malnourished**. › A 1986 survey showed that citizens in the US believed they needed an income of at least US$50,000 a year to "fulfil their **dreams**." By 1994, the figure had doubled. Public spending on primary and secondary **education** averages $15,500 per person in Luxembourg, and $57 in China. › Public and private spending on **health care** averages about $2,000 per person in Finland, and $3 in Viet Nam. › The average person in North America uses more than twice as much **electricity** as someone in the European Union, and 14 times more **energy** than someone in the developing world. An additional $6 billion a year would be needed to achieve **universal** basic education—about $2 billion less than what is currently spent in the USA alone on **cosmetics**. › An additional $13 billion a year would be needed to ensure basic **health** and **nutrition** for all—a fraction of the amount spent in Europe on cigarettes ($50 billion) or on **alcoholic drinks** ($105 billion). An additional $9 billion a year would be required to provide clean water and sanitation worldwide. That is about half the money currently spent on **pet food** in Europe and the USA. In 1997 the world spent $435 billion on **advertising**, mostly in Europe, North America and Japan. That is nearly 8 times the amount that was channeled to the developing world in the form of **official development assistance**.